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OR,

The Hawks of the Hook.

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AUTHOR OF "DUNCAN DARE," "A CABIN
BOY'S LUCK," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE MIDNIGHT RAIDERS.

It was a dark, blustering night at sea, and yet a small armed schooner was standing dangerously near to the Long Island coast, for a skillful commander is always anxious to avoid a lee shore.

Not a light was visible on the schooner, her topmasts were lowered, her mainsail and fore-staysail reefed, and one seeing her would have thought that she sought to avoid observation.

Now and then, from her decks, the glimmer of

THE SEA RAIDER

"NOW, DUNCAN DARE, DEAD TO THE DECK YOU GO, AND I HAVE MY REVENGE,"
SHOUTED CARL, THE CORSAIR, TO THE MIDDY."

a light in some farm-house was visible, and soon a number of lights came in view, a mile or more back from the shore, denoting a small settlement.

Upon the schooner's deck stood her crew, forward and in the waist, and half a hundred men all told.

On the quarter-deck were two officers, and a rough-looking man at the wheel.

"You are sure about the inlet, pilot?" said one of the officers speaking in the terse, decided voice of one who was accustomed to command.

"I know the coast, cap'n, or I wouldn't have offered to run you in," was the blunt response of the man at the wheel.

"All right, only it seemed to me when that accursed boy was our pilot, that he said the inlet was below the village, answered the officer.

"So it is, sir; it is yonder where you see that dark clump o' trees, and we can go in splendid before this breeze, but it will be a leetle hard to tack out."

"Well, we'll run in now, and look after running out when the time comes.

"I know I take big chances in to-night's work, but the necessities are great, and I am determined upon success," and the officer who had before spoken turned and addressed his companion in uniform, who replied:

"If you find the treasure, Captain Carl, it will be worth all the risks."

"Well, I think I can find it without a doubt, and I'll give you all the facts, so that you can see for yourself; come into the cabin with me."

He led the way to the cabin, and as the light fell upon him it revealed a man whose appearance was striking.

Not only was he well-formed, commanding in appearance and possessed of a certain courtly bearing that was very winning, but his face was handsome, if not studied too closely, for then were revealed faults of character, and there seemed upon his features the stamp of crime.

His companion was younger, good-looking, reckless-faced, and had the air of one whose life was given to dissipation.

Both were in sea uniforms and were armed with a fighting cutlass and pistols.

"Here, Lennox, is my map, or rather, part of it; the other half belonged to that old pirate Finlay, who, when wrecked upon this coast, turned schoolmaster and deacon; but I am confident did so to keep constantly on the hunt for the treasure which he knew the old buccaneer chief to have buried here somewhere.

"He had the map, and I have the directions, and he was trying to find it by the tracing on the map, while I am trying to find it by the directions without the lines.

"I got my directions from a dying pirate, and he told me where old Finlay was located, and, but that death overtook him, he would have gone to him and claimed a share for the paper he possessed.

"Now, you remember when I landed before, the night that boy swam out to us and acted as our pilot?"

"Yes, Captain Carl, I shall never forget that night of storm, and how that boy saved the vessel from wreck, and our lives."

"Yes, and stole my lady-love from me afterward, and nearly lost me my vessel.

"I wish I had killed him when I had him in my power; but his time will come, Lennox, for I never forgive a foe.

"But the night I speak of I landed and went to the school-house, where the old man taught and lived.

"I gained his rooms ever the school-house unseen, and beholding in him one who had wronged me in the past when I was a youth, I shot him dead without thought, and thus lost his map, for an alarm was given and I hastened outdoors, to find the storm coming up so savagely that I had to return to the schooner.

"Thus I lost his map, if I did get my revenge; but had I captured him I would have forced him to give it up.

"From what I learned from another source, I was convinced that Finlay had a confidant, in an old miser, one Barney Bolls, dwelling some distance away, so I sent down a party to capture him.

"They surprised him at his desk, and, as he raised a pistol, the officer in charge shot him dead, and thus I could learn nothing from him; but I feel assured that it was in his old house somewhere that the treasure was hidden, and it is there I am going to-night."

"How long ago was the treasure hidden, Captain Carl?"

"Some fifteen years ago."

"By whom?"

"The pirate chief known as Rafael the Rover."

"I have heard of him."

"Ah, yes, and he was a dashing fellow from all accounts.

"It seems he was wrecked here, in a vessel, on which he was going to New York after having given up his piratical life.

"He had his treasure on board, and several of his men were with him, and it was saved, though no one knew that the chests held aught that was valuable.

"The men who aided Rafael to bury the treasure, were afterward killed by him, it is said, all but one, and he is the one who drew the map of the locality and wrote the directions.

"Finlay got the map from him in some way, but he gave me the directions when he died on board the vessel I commanded when I was in the navy."

"Is the treasure very valuable?"

"It is said to be worth half a million, Lennox."

The lieutenant gave a pleased whistle, and the captain continued:

"Now, Lennox, the residence of Duncan Dare, that boy who outwitted me so, is not far from here, and I believe he is at home again, so I intend to raid his place, carry him off and woe be unto him."

"He saved us once, Captain Carl, and I think you might forgive him for what he afterward did."

"No, Lennox, I never forgive, and I have sworn to be avenged upon that boy, so mark my words that I keep my oath.

"But come, for we are now running before the wind, I notice, and the pilot is heading for the inlet," and the two officers ascended to the deck.

CHAPTER II.

FOILED BY A BOY.

INTO the inlet the schooner ran, under the skillful guidance of the pilot, and dropped anchor close inshore.

Two boat-loads of men, armed fully, then went ashore, leaving the vessel with but few on board.

The pilot, who knew the land as well as the sea-coast, then guided the armed band into the interior, avoiding the highways and farm-house and going across fields and through forests.

After a march of a couple of miles the party came in sight of a rambling structure situated back from the road, and among a clump of elms.

Dark and desolate looked the old homestead, as dark as the deeds which rumor had it had been committed there in the three-score years it had stood.

It had been the home of an old miser, Barney Bolls, whom all said was very rich and hoarded his money for love of its possession rather than enjoyment in its use.

In his house the old miser had met with his death, some time before, and yet some of his gold had been found by those who searched the old rookery in the hope of finding buried treasure.

To this old place now the band of midnight raiders wended their way, for their leader believed that he had at last discovered where a treasure buried long years before had been hidden.

Dark lanterns, picks, axes and saws had been brought along for use, if needed, and they halted among the elms and silently regarded the house, which the villagers not far away said was haunted.

The front door was open, and swung to and fro with a mournful, creaking sound, and that alone, with the rustling of the trees in the wind, broke the stillness.

"Men, we will enter the old building, for it certainly is deserted by all, excepting ghosts," said the man who had been called by his comrade Captain Carl.

The men shuddered, and moved uneasily, at the mention of ghosts being the occupants of the old mansion, and the leader, seeing it, regretted the remark, and hastily said:

"The only spirits we will find here, lads, are doubtless rare wines, with other piratical booty.

"But come, for we have no time to lose, as we must give the place a thorough search."

In single file they entered the old mansion with cautious tread, as though not even to disturb the echoes of the deserted halls.

A moment of silence followed, and then lights glimmered out from the windows, but these were quickly hidden beneath heavy folds of cloth the seamen hung over them.

Then all seemed dark and drear, and no one passing would have dreamed that the mansion held a large force of men.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a loud voice in stern command, and then the sound was lost in the rattle of firearms, clashing of steel and shouts of combatants.

Out of the doors and windows poured the raiders, and close after them came a large force of men who had been ambushed in the house to receive them.

Torn from their hangings, the impromptu curtains over the windows to shut out every ray of light, caused the old rookery to become brilliantly illuminated, and within were seen struggling men, men fighting to the death, as well as without.

It was a thrilling, a desperate scene, and driven from the house, those within joined the struggling mass without.

"We are beaten! back to your vessel, lads!" shouted the stern voice of the leader, and the retreat through the forest was begun.

But ere many steps had been made a lull in the combat brought to their ears the sound of fierce fighting over in the inlet.

"The schooner has been attacked!" shouted one of the raiders, and instantly, believing all lost, beaten at every point, shot down upon all sides, the Raiders began to cry for quarter.

Loud rung their cries for mercy, and the combat was at an end.

The wind howled mournfully through the trees, the wounded groaned in agony, the prisoners stood in grim silence, and back over their retreat were strewn the bodies of those slain.

Impressed by the scene in spite of himself, the leader of the victors issued his orders in low tones, and the lanterns glimmered here and there like fireflies, making a weird picture.

Suddenly, forms were seen rapidly advancing through the forest, the lanterns that they carried causing their shadows to dance about like huge giants dogging their footsteps.

"Ha! it's Master Duncan Dare!"

"A glorious welcome, Master Duncan!" cried the leader, and he sprang to greet the newcomers.

They were a party of seamen, and the leader was in the uniform of a midshipman in the United States navy.

He was a mere boy, but tall for his age, broad-shouldered, handsome, earnest-faced and manly.

He wore a cutlass dangling from his belt, and pistols, and the blade of the former was stained red.

"Ah, Constable Kane, we have the schooner, and I came over to aid you, if you needed it," said the youth, grasping the hand of the leader of the attacking party, who had so cleverly ambushed the Raiders in the old house.

"Your plan was well carried out, Master Duncan, and we caught them like foxes in a trap, and those who are not dead are prisoners; but you have the schooner?"

"Yes, I came down outside in a coaster, as I wrote you I would do, with a crew from a brig-of-war, and taking the helm myself, I ran into the inlet and laid the schooner aboard, capturing her after a short, sharp fight; but have you her captain a prisoner?"

"He's either a prisoner or dead, and I guess he fell at the old house, for he made himself pretty fierce there in the fight, and if his men had obeyed him, we would have had a hard time of it, I can tell you.

"But, Lordy! they took us for ghosts when we first opened on them, and it seemed to take the fight right out of them at first."

"Well, constable, I hope you have Captain Carl a prisoner, for hanging should be his fate, not the death of a brave man at the point of a sword or by bullet.

"But let us look after the wounded as quickly as possible," and the youth at once sought to relieve human suffering, of foes as well as friends, and thus the hours passed away, the constable detailing a party to bury the dead.

When dawn came the wounded had been taken on board the schooner, the dead had been buried in one large common grave, and the prisoners stood sullenly on the shore of the inlet under a strong guard, while scores of villagers and country people had gathered around, and were gazing with as much admiration upon the young hero midshipman as upon the pirates.

"Well, constable, the chief is not among the prisoners," said Duncan Dare, walking along the line and glancing into the faces of the pirates.

"Then he must be among the wounded on the schooner," answered Constable Kane.

"No, for I just came from on board."

"He's sure to be among the dead then, Master Duncan."

"I hope so, sincerely; but do any of you remember having seen your captain fall?" asked the midshipman, turning to the pirates.

"Yes, sir, he was killed, and as we were marching along I saw two men robbing his body, and then they pitched him into the big grave with the others," said a man who was a pirate coxswain.

"All right, I'll not look further for him."

"Now, constable, if you will get your prisoners on board the schooner, I will run over home to Dare farm and see my mother."

"Go, Master Duncan, and stay as long as you please, and it will be a glad day for her to have you come back a hero, and wearing a middy's uniform, when you went away from home a short while since charged with murder."

"I'll see that all goes well until you get back, and don't you hurry, either," and the good-hearted constable grasped the lad's hand warmly as he turned away, after which he called out to the assembled crowd of country people gathered around:

"Come, folks, you all wronged the boy a while since, though I admit things looked black against him; but now give him three rousing cheers, for he deserves 'em!"

With a will the cheers were given, and as the young midshipman turned and acknowledged it by raising his hat, the crowd burst forth again and again, while a carriage dashed up, and in it was a fine-looking old gentleman and a beautiful little girl of twelve.

Into this carriage the young hero sprang, and away it dashed through the forest road skirting the inlet, the driver sending the spirited horses along at a rapid pace.

CHAPTER III.

DUNCAN DARE, THE MIDDY.

THE youth, whose act had thwarted the Raiders in their search for hidden treasure, and whose expedition had turned out so disastrously for them, was only a boy in years, but he had the courage and nerve of a man, and was considered the most skillful pilot on the Long Island coast, where the scene of this story is laid.

From his earliest childhood he had been wont to swim in the surf, and run his light skiff in and out of the inlet, going through the breakers with a pluck that won the admiration of the old whalers and other seamen along the coast.

He had often made voyages to sea with his father, the commander of a vessel that was wont to make long cruises in foreign seas, and, being an only child, he was the idol of his parents.

In those early days education was by no means as general as it is now, and a village school, a mile and a half from the youth's home, was attended by pupils a league and more distant.

In this humble school-house the youth had learned rapidly, and stood at the head of his class, while the other pupils were wont to say that he was the favorite of Silas Finn, the dominie, as the master was called.

The schoolmaster was a queer person, silent, austere in manner, cruel toward delinquents, and had but one intimate friend, Miser Bolls, or Barney Bolls, an old man who dwelt half a mile away in a rickety and ancient farm-house, large enough for a family of twenty.

These two worthies were often together by day, but after nightfall it was said Silas Finn never left the school-house, for he dwelt over it, doing his own cooking and housework, and certainly dwelling in comfort as far as his rooms went.

The village was a mile away, and in it the gossips were wont to discuss over and over again the strange man; but he was known to be a man of knowledge, was a good teacher and ruled the pupils with a rod of iron, so that there were no complaints coming in of bad behavior at school.

The school-house had once been used as an old church, and about it, upon every side was a graveyard, where slept the dead of a century past, and the superstitious country folk, and their name was legion, wondered how it was that Silas Finn dared to live in the ancient structure, which they regarded as haunted by the spirits of the dead.

By day the little grove back of the school-house resounded with the merry voices of the children, and by night all was as still as the ashes that reposed in the surrounding graves.

A rich farming country, one or two almost lordly estates, a village, quaint and dating its

rise back two hundred years, an inlet from the sea, dangerous to enter for vessels of over half a dozen feet draft, and a low, wild, yet picturesque coast, made up the surroundings of the home of Duncan Dare.

Upon a hill, back from the sea some distance, and surrounded by a thousand acres of land, was a grand old mansion, the home of Squire Hampton, a man whose ancestry and wealth made him a power in the land.

There he dwelt, in luxury, with his only child, Jessie, surrounded by a large number of servants, with hounds for the chase, a yacht on the north, or Sound shore, and enjoying life as a fine old country gentleman, as he was.

It was the carriage of Squire Hampton, who had drawn up in the roadway, and into which Duncan Dare had sprung, when leaving Constable Kane to look after the pirate prisoners, while he went to his home to see his mother.

"Come, Duncan, jump in, and we'll give you a lift on your way, for I know you are turning your steps homeward to see your mother," called out the squire as he called his coachman to a halt, and then said:

"To Dare farm, David."

"Yes, Squire Hampton, I am going to see mother, but only for a short time, as I must get up to New York with the prisoners; but I am so glad to see you and you too, Jessie," and Duncan turned to the pretty little child-woman, who answered in her sweet way:

"And I to see you again, Master Duncan."

"Master Duncan! why how formal you are," the boy said, in an injured tone.

"But you are a midshipman now," she said, softly.

"If I was an admiral, Jessie, I would wish to be plain Duncan Dare to you."

"Well said, my boy; but when you left home some months ago, you were Jessie's school-mate, and returning as you do, a young naval officer, and more still as the leader of a successful expedition against the pirates, we are both awed by your fame, and I felt too like saying Midshipman Dare."

"No, squire, I have only changed my school-boy suit for a uniform, not my nature, sir; but Constable Kane told you then of my letter to him, and my plot to have him aid me in capturing the pirates?"

"Oh, yes, and he got picked men, to surprise the outlaws, and all turned out well with his party, while you captured the schooner with a coaster, as I saw, for we drove along near where the two vessels are anchored."

"It will prove a great day for you, Duncan, and I predict that you will wear a captain's straps before you are half a dozen years older, for already you are fit to command a vessel; but here we are at the gates of Dare farm, so we will leave you; but come back to the island as soon as you can, my boy, and remember that you shall always have a warm welcome at Hampton Hall."

"I thank you, squire; but you and Jessie will certainly come in and breakfast with mother and I?"

"No, my son, after all that your good mother and you have suffered, since you parted, I would not break in upon your meeting for a fortune."

"Go in at once, for I know she anxiously awaits you, and we may come aboard to wish you success before you sail, which I suppose will be by noon."

"Yes, sir, for the tide will be in then and give me plenty of water in the inlet for the schooner to run out," and Duncan Dare bade the squire and Jessie a hasty farewell, and ran toward the house.

It was a handsome house, with an air of comfort about it, and the acres surrounding it were certainly cultivated most highly.

As he ascended the piazza a lady came out, almost tottering toward him, as though her limbs were sinking beneath her weight.

She was a woman of surpassing beauty, perhaps thirty-five years of age, yet scarcely looking as old by half a dozen years.

Her form was slight, very graceful and well-rounded, and her face, though pale and haggard just then, was one to win admiration and command respect.

"Duncan, my noble boy, God bless you!" she cried, as she threw her arms about her son and clasped him convulsively to her.

"Mother, your runaway boy has come home again, so don't look so sad and pale, for, see, I wear a midshipman's uniform, and am one of Uncle Sam's officers now, and you must congratulate me."

Such was the meeting of those two, mother and son, and the strange parting of whom some time before shall be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MIDDY'S STORY.

FOR a long time the mother and her son were together in the parlor, seemingly too happy to speak, and keeping silent from very joy.

At last the woman controlled her emotion and said:

"Come, Duncan, Liza and Dan are awaiting to give you a welcome, as are the farm-people, and then, too, breakfast awaits, and you look tired."

"Yes, and hungry, too, mother, for one of Liza's good breakfasts, and when it is over we can have a long talk together, for I will not sail until afternoon."

"And you must leave me so soon, Duncan?"

"Yes, mother, for I have my duties to perform, as you know I am midshipman commanding, as they say on board ship," and the mother and son walked out into the cosey breakfast-room where Dan and Liza, negro servants, gave him a warm welcome, and then several farm hands crowded to the door to shake his hand.

"Oh, what a breakfast for a hungry boy!" cried Duncan, with delight, as his eyes feasted upon the broiled chicken, coffee and cream, hot biscuit, griddle-cakes and scrambled eggs.

Mrs. Dare was delighted to see the youth eat as he did, while Liza kept supplying him with hot biscuit, eggs and griddle-cakes from the kitchen, until he begged off with the remark:

"This breakfast will last me until I get back, Liza."

"But you will be here to dinner, my son," anxiously said the mother.

"I'm a boy, mother, and consequently ever ready to eat, so I'll remain; but can you not send Dan over to ask Squire Hampton and Jessie to come, and then all go on board the schooner with me, and run out of the inlet, returning in my surf skiff, for I wish you to see the pirate craft?"

"Yes, I'll send Dan at once, Duncan," said Mrs. Dare, and the negro soon after rode away upon his errand to Judge Hampton, while the mother led her son to the seclusion of her own room.

"Oh, mother, what have I not passed through since I left my dear old home," said the boy, as he threw himself down upon a sofa by his mother's side.

"I know that you must have passed through a great deal, my son, and you must tell me all, and at once."

"I hardly know where to begin, mother; but you remember the terrible flogging that Silas Finn gave me, and how, when I came home from school, you dressed the cuts Liza's cruel stick made?"

"Can I forget it ever, Duncan?"

"Mother, if I need a reminder, the scars will remain to recall that flogging, and all because I told him he should not marry you."

"But that is over now, though, when you told me you would marry him, I left home, as you know."

"I slipped out of my room in the night, with my little hoarded-up purse of gold, and a change of clothing and I went to the sea-shore, where I had seen a schooner anchored in the afternoon."

"She was among the shoals, and, as a storm was coming up, you remember I sent Dan to the village to tell the people; but he was afraid to go, and I found him crouching out in the woods near the house, when I went out."

"I would not take a boat, for I did not wish you to know how I went, but I swam out to the schooner, and I found her to be a pirate craft."

"Oh, Duncan!"

"Yes, mother, and her captain had come to our coast to land a force to hunt up a buried treasure, the booty of a pirate known as Rafael the Rover, and which he had hidden here years ago; but why do you start and tremble, mother?"

"Your story is a strange one, my son; but continue, please."

"I refused to pilot the schooner into the inlet, when I knew what she was, and the captain, a very handsome, but a very bad man, told his lieutenant to run his sword into my heart, if I did not obey within a given time."

"I believe he would have killed me, when out of the cabin came a beautiful young lady, as beautiful as you are, mother, and she told them they were destroying their lives and the vessel, by killing me, for the storm was upon us."

"They seemed to realize this, so spared me, and I took the helm and ran the schooner out to sea by the Back Bone Channel, although it was the worst storm I ever saw."

"The pirate chief was so pleased that he made me cabin boy, and yet, strange to say, allowed me also to act as pilot and officer."

"Who was the lady, my son?"

"Mother, there comes the strange part of my story, for she was the daughter of a wealthy Maryland planter, living on Chesapeake Bay, and she had saved the vessel which Captain Carl the pirate, had commanded, when he was an officer in the navy.

"She is one of the best sailors I ever saw, and had risked her life to pilot his vessel into the harbor near her home, for she told me that she and her twin brother had been reared to sail boats, ride, drive and shoot, as though they had both been boys.

"Well, she fell in love with the officer, and he with her; but she soon after found him out to be a gambler and a wicked man.

"He was dismissed from the navy, and then turned pirate, while she believed him to be living an honest life.

"Loving him as she did, when he came and begged her to fly with him, she consented, for her father wished her to marry a man more than double her age.

"The man had been a college chum of her father, and was a fine fellow, yet the lady did not love him, and so Miss Kate Kenyon, for such was her name, fled one night with her lover, Captain Carl, just before she was to have married the South Carolina planter, Merton Regnier.

"As soon as she went on board, Miss Kenyon discovered the name of the craft, the Spitfire, and knew she had been deceived, and that her lover was none other than Captain Carl of the West Indian corsair vessel Spitfire.

"It was a fearful discovery to make, as you can imagine, and her love for the man, Carl Casandra, turned to hate, and in vain he begged her to become his wife, for she was firm, and he kept her a prisoner on the vessel, striving to force her to marry him.

"She was thus a captive when I boarded the schooner, and though I could have readily made my escape, I would not do so until I could aid her to get away, for she told me her sad story.

"At last the opportunity offered, and we escaped together, made our way to Castle Kenyon, the name of her plantation home, told her father all, and I went to Baltimore and told the captain of a brig-of-war how the schooner could be taken.

"She ran out of her hiding-place ahead of us, and thus escaped, but I was made a midshipman, and knowing the places of the pirate was allowed to attempt his capture, being given a number of brave tars to aid me.

"So I wrote to Constable Kane, told him my plan, and the result you know, mother; but I am sorry that Captain Carl was not captured alive, that he might be hanged, if only for his cruel treatment of Miss Kenyon."

"My noble boy, no man could have rendered better service than you have done, and though it pains me to give you up, I will not be selfish and keep you out of a service you are so ably fitted to adorn, so return to your duties when you deem that you must.

"But, Duncan, I too have a story to tell, and it is one that will give you deep pain.

"Still it must be told, bitter as the telling must be," and the mother seemed deeply moved by memories that crowded upon her, as though she recalled some terrible nightmare through which she had passed.

CHAPTER V.

A STRANGE NARRATIVE.

"My son," began Mrs. Dare, in a low, earnest tone:

"There have strange things happened of late in this neighborhood, and it but shows how careful one should be before he accuses another of guilt, unless the proof is beyond all doubt.

"I wish to now tell you, my son, what I hitherto have held from you, that you may understand just how I was placed in regard to Silas Finn, the schoolmaster.

"To begin aright I must go back to my first meeting with your father.

"You know that I, as well as other young girls of my day along this coast, were said to know all about sailing, swimming and managing a life skiff in the surf, so that I was as competent as a man to go to the aid of those in distress.

"I one night went out to the rescue of a vessel that had struck upon the shoals in a fearful storm, and one whom I then saved was your father.

"He was a superb-looking man, and said that he was a passenger on the vessel, going to New York.

"At the time of his rescue he had one boat

filled with what appeared to be boxes containing something that was very heavy.

"This boat was sunk in the inlet at a certain spot, and, as your father said its cargo was of no value, and asked me not to speak of it to any one, I never did so.

"Well, your father was brought here to my house, and he was sadly in need of tender care, so that I devoted myself to him.

"That I fell in love with him you know, and he asked me to be his wife.

"Excepting his own word, we knew nothing of him; but he seemed to be rich, and was certainly a gentleman, so no objection was raised to my marrying him by those most deeply interested in me.

"There were some things about your father that I could not understand, and he was a mystery to me; but he loved me devotedly, was ever most kind, and believing that he had suffered in the past in some way, I never referred to his life elsewhere.

"You know that he purchased a vessel and made voyages to other lands, and on one of these was lost; but you do not know that one other, Silas Finn, who was wrecked upon this coast, as was your father, came to me with a strange and terrible story regarding him.

"He said that your father was dead, yes, had gone down in his ship in a storm; but he told me that he had sailed with Captain Dare years before, when he was a pirate!"

"A pirate?" gasped the boy, turning deadly pale.

"Yes, Duncan, so said Silas Finn, and strange to say he seemed to have proof of his assertions."

"I can never believe it, mother."

"Nor did I, at first, and a lingering doubt yet rests in my mind; but Silas Finn told me frankly that he had been taken prisoner by your father, when he commanded a pirate craft, and was known as Rafael the Rover."

"Rafael the Rover?" said the boy in a hoarse whisper.

"Yes."

"Go on, mother, with the story of Silas Finn, for I am listening most attentively."

"He told me that your father was engaged to a lady in the South, but had been discarded by her, for some of his wild acts, and had taken to piracy.

"Having amassed a fortune by piracy, he had given up his vessel, and, with his booty of gold, silver plate and costly articles, had taken passage in a vessel bound to New York, from the West Indies, and intended to there live like a prince on his ill-gotten gains.

"It was on this voyage that his vessel was blown off her course by the storm and wrecked, and the boat which I towed ashore, and which was laden, as I told you, with heavy boxes, contained his treasure.

"This boat, as you know, was sunk in the inlet, and, strange to say, Duncan, though I went to the spot afterward, and the water at low tide, was but a few feet deep, I could not find it.

"I then remembered that your father was wont to leave the farm-house often at night, and be gone for hours.

"Silas Finn said that he was at such times engaged in raising the treasure from the boat and burying it, and certain it is that it was taken from the place where it sunk in the inlet.

"A miniature likeness of Rafael the Rover, Silas Finn had, and it was the image of your father, while other proofs he showed me, until I felt convinced that the man spoke the truth, especially when he told me he had remained here to search for the treasure which your father had concealed.

"Having made known to me this horrible story, Silas Finn asked me to become his wife.

"I scorned him, but he told me plainly that he loved me, would make me a good husband, and all would be well, if I married him; but if I refused he would make known that I had been the wife of Rafael the Rover, and that you were the son of a pirate."

"The villain!" hissed the boy.

"Alarmed at such a threat I consented, and then you were told by him that he was to be your stepfather, and you resented it, and unfortunately threatened him.

"His flogging you followed, then your flight, and the same night he was found dead in his room, a bullet in his brain.

"Your disappearance led all to believe you guilty, and Constable Nat Kane, following the line of his duty, went in search of you.

"The night you left there was a fearful storm, but, believing you in your bed, I went through the forest to the old school-house, to

beg Silas Finn to spare me, and if he refused, to tell him to do his worst.

"To my horror I found him dead, and beheld him sitting in his chair, a wound in his forehead.

"In dismay, I fled back home, and reached it in safety, though I had been seen.

"The connection that existed between Silas Finn and Barney Bolls, the miser, I can only understand in that the former had to have aid in his search for the treasure, and so let the old miser into the secret in part.

"When, therefore, you were away, accused of the murder of Silas Finn, and it was known that Barney Bolls was our foe, it was but natural, when the latter was also found dead, that the eyes of all turned upon me.

"I had gone to the office, hoping for a letter from you, and one had come, but the postmaster had given it to Barney Bolls, who said he would bring it to me; but he meant to discover your place of hiding, as he believed, and thus have you brought back.

"He refused to give me the letter, and I horse-whipped him until he howled with pain and threw the letter down, calling to some one to seize it.

"But I almost crushed the hand of the man that attempted to do so, by driving my heel upon it, and seizing the letter, I threw it into the fire unread."

"My brave, my noble mother!" said Duncan.

"That night Barney Bolls was found dead, shot through the brain, in his old rookery, and as I had gone to Squire Hampton's to consult him, as Barney Bolls had had me arrested, and I had returned at night on horseback by the miser's house, I was accused of being his murderer."

"My poor mother, how bitterly you have suffered!"

"My son, Heaven only knows what I have suffered, for it was then said, as I had been seen out on the night of Silas Finn's murder, that I, not you, had slain him, and I was quickly incarcerated in jail.

"Then came your letter to Constable Kane, explaining your departure to him, and the squire at once had me released on bail; and now you come home in honor as a hero, and explain away as the acts of the pirates the murder of both Silas Finn and Barney Bolls, and all is well once more."

"No, no, mother, all is not well when they have made you suffer so under false accusations!

"But you must not mind the wicked accusers, and turn your back upon all who have persecuted you.

"They will do so no more now, mother, and one of these days we will move far from here and live most happily.

"What you tell me of my father pains me more than I can express; but still I doubt, and I will do all in my power to solve the mystery.

"But whether he was a pirate or honest man he was a good husband to you and a loving father to me, and for what he was I respect his memory; but the mystery must yet be solved in some way.

"Ah! here comes Dan back again, and the carriage of the squire is following him, so we can have a happy dinner together, and then you can all go on board the schooner and accompany me well out to sea."

And Duncan Dare arose and went out to meet the squire and his pretty daughter, who just then drove up to the door.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FUGITIVE PIRATE.

AMONG the sand dunes, cast up by the waves and winds, upon the Long Island shore, and resembling in the distance a range of mountains, a man was crouching, as though to hide from human eyes.

He was in a bowl near the summit of a sand dune, and he was peering landward, through the grassy fringe that grew upon the edge of the little pit.

The tracks he had left, in seeking his covert, had been obliterated by the wind that was blowing at a twenty-mile-an-hour pace, and he seemed certainly most secure from discovery.

A mile or more distant, upon the shores of an inlet that put in from the ocean, a large crowd was gathered, and a cable's length off-shore were anchored two vessels, the one a trim-looking schooner, armed, and with the guns run out, and a large coasting sloop.

Upon the deck of each vessel were seen men moving about, and at the peaks were floating the United States flag.

On the waters of the inlet were a dozen boats,

some of them filled with people, and they were rowing around the two vessels, as though examining them with curious eyes.

Near the further shore of the inlet, in a small cove, on the banks of which stood a copse of trees, were several small pleasure-boats, for sail and oar, at anchor, and beyond, across a lawn-like meadow, was a farm-house, where comfort and contentment seemed to dwell.

From this scene the eyes of the man in the sand dune turned upon a village in the distance, and a range of hills beyond, while farm-houses and cultivated lands were visible in every direction.

The one whose gaze thus rested upon the pretty landscape, now turned his eye upon the boundless sea, where the crested waves were rolling shoreward, and breaking in sullen roar upon the white sands.

Not a sail dotted the vast expanse of blue, and with a sigh the eyes of the watcher once more turned upon the scene inland.

The man was one whom the reader had met the night before upon the deck of the schooner, for he was none other than the young captain of the pirate vessel, he whom the captors of his crew then believed to be dead and lying in the grave with those who had fallen.

His uniform was soiled, and the sleeve of his left arm was blood-stained, showing that he had not escaped the combat unscathed.

His face was pale, a look of suffering rested upon it, and yet there was an expression of ferocity lurking in his eyes.

His sword had been broken, but the hilt and a part of the blade lay at his feet, while in his belt were a couple of pistols, with the flints in place and the powder in the pan ready for use.

He had fought well, and to the last, in his unholy fight, and then, seeing that all was lost, he had given up his fight, watched his chance and made his escape in the darkness, the only one of his crew who had not been killed, wounded or captured.

Flying for his life, he had made his way to the shores of the inlet, to discover that his vessel was in the possession of Duncan Dare, for he had crouched down in some bushes, and seen the victorious youth land, after the schooner was in his possession.

"Satan's maledictions upon the boy!"

"But I am not yet dead," he hissed, and he rapidly made his way toward the sea-shore, and, as dawn was approaching, sought safety by climbing to the top of a sand dune and hiding in the bowl-like place made by the wind.

"They must believe me dead," he muttered; "for I see no parties searching for me."

"So be it; I yet live, and Duncan Dare you will find it out to your sorrow," and the face of the man grew fiendish in its look of hatred.

Long he lay there in his retreat, the hot sun pouring down upon him, his wound paining him, terribly, and with no water near, nor any food.

He had a sea glass, which was slung to a strap at his belt, and this he had placed in position, so as to give him a view of the inlet, and what was occurring there, and he often bent his gaze upon the scene.

He saw the crowd increase in size, as the day wore on, the pirate crew taken out in boats to the schooner, and then all seemed to be awaiting the coming of some one.

Accidentally he glanced over toward the farm-house, before referred to, the lands of which ran down to the shore of the inlet, and he beheld a party of four persons coming along the roadway leading to the little cove, where the pleasure boats were at anchor.

Turning his glass quickly upon the party, the pirate captain cried aloud:

"It is that boy, Duncan Dare!"

"But who are those with him?"

"Ah! it is his mother, evidently, but the others I cannot make out."

Down to the cove they came, and having been seen from the schooner's deck, a boat with six oarsmen, and with Constable Kane as coxswain was sent ashore for them.

The pirate fugitive saw them board his schooner, and he gritted his teeth viciously, and soon after sail was gotten on both vessels, and amid loud cheering of the crowd on shore and those on the boats, they stood toward the entrance to the inlet.

At the helm stood Duncan Dare, and by his side were his mother, Jessie and the squire, with the constable near.

A large surf-boat was in tow of the schooner, and in this the party were to return, while the vessels went on their way.

The schooner led, the sloop following close in her wake, and the crowd on the shore hastened down to the beach to watch their departure,

while a score of small boats, containing parties from the village, followed them to the mouth of the inlet.

From his point of lookout Captain Carl watched his schooner going out to sea with a sinking heart.

"Curses on you, boy! you have thwarted me, in getting that treasure of Rafael the Rover, for I believe I could have found it, and now you are carrying my beautiful schooner up to the city a prize."

"My crew are either dead, or prisoners, and I am here alone, penniless, and with a price on my head."

"Oh! but there shall come a day of reckoning with you, Duncan Dare!" and the pirate was livid with rage.

Having gained an offing the schooner hove to, and the watching outlaw, closely watching with his glass, saw the long surf-boat put back toward the shore, and in it were a dozen people.

"His mother and those who were with her, are returning, and along with them that desperate leader of the band who attacked me."

"Yes, my schooner goes on her way to the city, and that boy is at her helm."

Throwing himself back upon the sand, in an almost despairing way, the pirate remained thus for a long time ere he again looked out over the waters.

The schooner, two leagues away, was dashing along under pressure of a strong wind, her sails roped down to prevent her running away from the sloop in her wake, that was under a full spread of canvas.

The boats in the inlet had gone up to the further end, and disappeared around a bend in the woods, where the pirate knew the villagers kept their little pleasure craft.

The crowd had disappeared, and the long surf-boat had just landed its passengers upon the pier in the little cove near the Dare farm.

Then the party moved off slowly toward the farm-house, a quarter of a mile away.

The sun was drawing near its setting, and still Captain Carl kept his glass riveted upon the farm-house, the path to the shore of the cove, and upon the pleasure craft at anchor there.

"Yes, I can do that, I know; now to examine the inlet," he muttered.

Turning his glass upon the entrance to the inlet, he seemed to be studying the waters, with the reef beyond, and then as the darkness began to creep over land and sea, he said, in a determined, reckless way:

"By Heaven! I will do it!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST REVENGEFUL BLOW!

HARDLY had twilight fallen upon the earth, when Captain Carl left his hiding place.

He was evidently suffering, and at first walked slowly and with difficulty, but soon stepped with a quicker movement, and was not very long in coming to the inlet shores.

He saw that the tide was just turning, and he hastily plunged into the water, for to go around the head of the inlet was a matter of leagues, and would carry him dangerously near the village and more thickly settled part of the country, while, if he waited, the full sweep of the current out to sea might carry him with it.

He was a bold swimmer, so made good headway with his clothes on, and incumbered as he was with his broken sword and pistols.

The tide swept him outward some distance, in the hundred yards he had to swim, but he made a landing, and then walked hastily along the sandy shores until he came to the fringe of trees bordering the Dare farm harborage.

A boat was moored against the little pier, and into this he sprang and sculled it rapidly out to a small cat-rig craft, some twenty-five feet in length, and with a comfortable cabin.

The cabin was not locked, and opening it he went within.

Feeling around in the darkness he discovered that it had a bunk on either side, a table that let down when not in use, and above it hung a lamp.

A small locker was beneath the lamp, and to his delight he found the means of lighting it.

Closing the doors of the cabin, so that the light might not be seen by curious eyes, he soon lit the lamp and gazed about him.

The little cuddy was by no means uninviting, there was bedding there, a storm suit and tarpaulin hung upon a peg, and a locker, beneath a seat, was supplied with a side of bacon, a bag of crackers, a can of ground coffee, another of sugar, and a second locker contained some bundles of light wood, a tiny stove to cook on and a few cooking utensils.

A cask was also in the cabin, and the pirate was delighted to find that it was filled with fresh water.

"I certainly am in luck," he muttered, and turning the lamp down low he went on deck.

The craft rode by a single anchor, and seemed, from her build to be seaworthy and speedy.

The sail was neatly furled, but this was soon shaken loose, and all arrangements made to depart.

The anchor was then hauled up and the boat was pulled up to the little pier, where it was made fast by the painter and the sail raised.

A saw found in the locker was then put to use in cutting a hole in the other boats, excepting a small life skiff which was fastened astern of the cat-rig.

"Now I am ready to be off in an instant, as soon as I raise the sail," he said, and with some difficulty he accomplished this, for his wounded arm seemed to give him trouble.

As he got the sail spread, he saw the boats he had mutilated going down, and he uttered a low chuckle as he said:

"They will not be used in pursuit."

Stepping out upon the pier, he then walked toward the farm-house, in which was visible a light, though it was now getting to be a late hour for country folk to be up.

Cautiously he approached the outhouses, and stood in the shadow of the barn for some time, watching to see if any one was moving about.

No one was in sight, and, as he looked, the light in the house disappeared.

Then he approached the house cautiously, and stopping at a stack gathered an armful of hay.

This he carried to the side of the house and placed it beneath the piazza, and in such a way that it could not fail to quickly ignite the dry woodwork of the building.

Back and forth from the haystack he went several times, carrying heavy loads each trip, and then he sought the shed and gathered armfuls of light wood, which were tossed under the piazza on the hay.

Steadily and systematically he worked, and having arranged one pile to his satisfaction, he went to another part of the house and made a second, and then a third pile of inflammable material.

This devilish work completed, he lighted a torch and rushing to the first pile quickly ignited it.

Hardly had it blazed up when he had reached the second and the third piles of hay and light wood and then all three began to blaze furiously.

Standing back in the shadow of an outhouse he gazed upon the scene with the fiendish delight of an Indian, when suddenly the loud baying of a dog was heard, dashing from around the front of the mansion where he had evidently been sleeping in blissful ignorance of the inhuman work going on against those whom he was to guard from danger.

As the dog bounded toward him, the door of the rear wing of the mansion opened and a negro came forth wild with fright.

With his broken sword the pirate met the dog and dealt him a blow that laid him bleeding and dying at his feet; but the negro now saw him, by the light of the flames, and rushed upon him most savagely, crying:

"Oho! you is one o' dem pirts, is you, that Massa Dunkin captered, and you wants ter revenge yerself, does yer?"

"Yes, I am Captain Carl, of the Spitfire, and I came here for revenge against your young master, so take that!" was the stern response, and knocking aside the blow of the negro's club, which he had hastily seized, Captain Carl gave him a slash with his broken blade that brought him down upon his knees.

Quickly he gave him another stroke, and the brave fellow sunk in his tracks with a groan, just as wild cries were heard from the mansion, and old Liza, a negress, rushed out, screaming:

"Fire! fire! fire!"

The farm-hands, dwelling in an outhouse not far away, were now aroused, and with a bitter laugh of triumph, the pirate turned and fled toward the inlet.

As he ran the flames from the three separate parts of the mansion began to light up the scene, and the crackling of burning timbers reached his ears.

"The house is doomed, for they cannot save it now."

"Ha! the village church bell is ringing the alarm, so I must away, as they may have some craft further up the inlet in which they can follow me."

So saying he sped along like a deer, reaching

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the little pier, cast off the sail-boat's painter and sprung on board.

A stiff breeze was blowing, and catching the sail it sent the boat rapidly out into the inlet, while the light of the burning farm-house made all around brightly visible.

Out of the inlet he headed, and following the channel, as he remembered the schooner had done on entering, he soon ran into the breakers, passing them in safety and gaining the open sea.

Once he had reached deep water he put his helm down and headed for Montauk Point, at the further end of the island.

As he sailed briskly along he saw the flames springing up high in air, from the burning house, and the voices of excited people and the ringing of alarm bells came distinctly to his ears, while the ruddy glare in his face showed it in all its fiendish triumph.

"Mrs. Duncan Dare, I have struck my first revengeful blow in setting fire to your house, so beware of my next, for I know no mercy to one who has wronged me!" fairly hissed the pirate chief, as he stood up in the little boat and shook his clinched hand at the burning farm-house a mile away.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PIRATE'S LADY-LOVE.

THE scene of my story changes from the Atlantic coast of Long Island, to the beautiful shores of Chesapeake Bay, at a point not very many leagues from the city of Baltimore.

To one on the deck of a vessel sailing down the bay, a beautiful landscape would have met the eye, at the time of which I write, for a lordly house stands upon the summit of a wooded ridge, and sloping gently downward is a lawn that touches the white sands of a small cove, or harbor, which is sheltered from the rude seas and winds by an arm of land that is heavily timbered.

The mansion presents the appearance of a small castle, with its numerous wings, turrets and single massive tower, and on several sides are wide piazzas that overlook the bay and the landscape around.

A flower garden is upon one side of the mansion, a park upon the other and the lawn in front, while in the rear are substantial looking hot-houses.

A winding carriage drive runs along the top of the ridge, to a massive arched gateway in the distance, that opens upon the highway leading to Baltimore, and upon the sea side of the house, is a gravel walk leading to a cliff that overhangs the waters of the bay above the little harborage.

Upon this cliff stands a young girl, and just behind her is a rustic arbor, in which upon a table is a guitar.

In one hand she holds a book, in the other a sea-glass, and her eyes are turned upon a small sloop that is coming swiftly down the bay, and near inshore.

As she stands there the maiden presents a beautiful picture, for her form is perfection itself, willowy in every motion, and her face is one of strange beauty, for the lovely features, full of refinement, bear on them the stamp of one who would do and dare, and could be as firm as iron.

"It is not a fishing craft, that is certain, and our harbor seems to be her destination; but, if her skipper has never sailed in before, it will be very wrong for him to attempt it."

"I will go out to him if he signals, though who he can be I cannot understand."

So said the maiden, and throwing aside her book she turned her spy-glass upon the coming sail.

The vessel was a small one, with look of a Baltimore pleasure craft, and but three persons were visible on board.

Two of these were blacks, and the third, a white, was seated at the tiller.

Still watching from the cliff the maiden saw the man at the tiller put his helm suddenly down and run for the little cove.

"Ah! who can he be that attempts to run in without a pilot?"

"But he certainly runs right in the channel, and holds on without shortening sail, as though conscious of his own ability to reach the harborage in safety."

"If he rounds Turtle Back Shoal, without striking, he will get in without difficulty."

"Ah! I see his face now, and it is my brave boy preserver," and the maiden suddenly darted away down the path leading to the shore of the cove.

As the little craft reached the pier, and the one who held the tiller sprung out, he was met

by the maiden, who grasped his extended hand in both her own, and said earnestly:

"Ah! I am so glad to see you, Midshipman Dare, and it was most kind of you to come."

"It was my duty, as well as my pleasure to do so, Miss Kate, for business called me to Washington, and I obtained leave of a few days to see you, as I have much to tell you."

"I am glad you did not forget me; but tell your men to come on up to the mansion, as soon as they have made your craft shipshape, and they shall be well cared for."

"No, thank you, they will remain on board, for they have all they need, and I must start back early to-morrow," and Duncan Dare, for he it was, offered his arm to the maiden and led the way up the hill pathway toward the mansion.

A servant met them at the door, and Kate Kenyon gave orders to have the youth shown at once to his room, after which she sent to the two negroes who formed the crew of the little craft in which Duncan Dare had come down to the plantation, all kinds of good edibles.

In a short while Duncan made his appearance and joined the maiden out upon the piazza.

"I am sorry my father is away from home, Duncan, and he will not return until to-morrow, as he has gone down to his plantation on the James river; but I wish you could remain to see him, for he will be greatly disappointed at missing you."

"As I am at not seeing him, Miss Kate; but I deemed it my duty to run down to see you, as well as it was my pleasure, for much has taken place since I saw you, that you should know."

"Ah! you have seen Carl Casandra," she said quickly, and her face paled.

"I have met him, yes; yet hardly can say that I have seen him."

"You remember the plans of Captain Carl which we discovered, or rather you did, when you were a captive on his schooner, Miss Kate?"

"In regard to his intended hunt for the treasure on Long Island?"

"Yes."

"He had a clew to the burying-place of certain booty belonging to Rafael the Rover?"

"Yes, and was to go there and make a search for it, aided by certain maps and directions that he had come in possession of."

"I laid my plans to thwart him, and they were successful, for Captain Carl ran his schooner into the inlet near my home, landed his party of searchers, they being two-thirds of his crew, and left the vessel at anchor."

"I had written to Constable Kane, who you remember came to the schooner in search of me when we lay hidden near New York, and told him to have a band ready to attack the pirates when they reached the deserted house which they were going to search for the treasure, while I would run into the inlet with a vessel and capture the Spitfire."

"This I did, and the constable also accomplished his work thoroughly."

"And Carl Casandra?" asked Kate Kenyon, earnestly, clasping her hands nervously.

"He was killed in the attack on him by the constable and his party."

"Dead—dead! and he was the man that won my love!"

"Ah me! what did he not make me suffer to feel that I had loved unworthily?"

"But it is better so—better that he be dead than living such a life."

The tears were dimming her beautiful eyes, and her lips were quivering as she spoke, rather to herself than addressing the youth.

"Did you see him slain, Duncan?" she asked calmly, after awhile.

"No, Miss Kate. He was killed by the land force."

"Did he die like a brave man?"

"Ah, Miss Kate, Captain Carl was a brave man, vile as he was by nature; and Constable Kane said that if the pirates had obeyed their leader when surprised and attacked, they might have beaten his men off."

"Had they done this, and regained the schooner, the fight would have been a desperate one, for I had but twenty men with me."

"Where was he buried?"

"In the grave with his men, in a small copse of pines near where he fell."

"So be it; he is at rest, and can sin no more; but, Duncan, it is strange that I could love one so unworthy."

"I had torn every atom of love for him from my heart, but now that he is dead, I forget his sins, and remember him as he appeared to me when first I knew him."

"Better far that he had drowned that night of storm, rather than that I should have gone

out in the life-boat and saved him, his vessel and crew, and had him become what he did."

"Miss Kate, had Captain Carl lived, he would not have given you up, for he had sworn to make you his wife, and he would have come here and taken you away, mark my words on that."

"I believe you, Duncan, and it is far better as it is, and it was kind of you to come and tell me all."

"But now tell me of yourself, and your future plans; and let me know all about your visit home, and if you saw the sweet little Jessie Hampton, of whom you so often spoke to me?"

The name of Jessie caused Duncan Dare's eyes to sparkle, and he told the lovely maiden all about his run to the inlet, the capture of the Spitfire, his visit home, and his setting sail for New York, where, after having delivered up his prisoners, he had been sent to Washington, by the kind-hearted commander of the brig-of-war, to make his own report of the affair.

"And what will you do now, Duncan?" asked Kate Kenyon.

"The Spitfire is to be fitted out as a Government cruiser, her cruising-ground to be around Long Island Sound, down the coast, up the Chesapeake Bay and back to the lower bay of New York, and I am to act as third officer on board of her, holding rank as passed midshipman."

"This is splendid, Duncan, and we will often see you then, for never must you pass up or down the Chesapeake without giving us a call, and your brother officers will be ever welcome."

"But why must you hurry away?"

"Because I am ordered to take charge of the Spitfire until her commander, his other officers and crew arrive on board."

"Well, Duncan, you have before you a brilliant career, and my prayers will ever attend you, for I owe to you more than I can ever repay, as it is a fearful thing to be a pirate's lady-love, and be in his power too."

"I should have died by my own hand had you not rescued me from him, and you know I can never forget you," and Kate Kenyon spoke with an earnestness that was most impressive.

"Have you seen Mr. Merton Regnier, the gentleman your father wished you to marry?" asked Duncan, anxious to change the subject.

"No, nor heard of him; but had I not, believing Carl Casandra true, have run off with him, I would have married Merton Regnier, and yet I did not love him."

"Now I would not renew my engagement with him if he returned, for all love in my heart is at an end, and I shall live and die as I am, plain Kate Kenyon; but come, there is the tea-bell, and we will have a pleasant little supper together," and Kate led the way, throwing off with an effort the sad memories that were crowding upon her at the recollection that she had been the lady-love of a pirate.

CHAPTER IX.

DUNCAN DARE RECEIVES A LETTER.

AFTER spending the night at Castle Kenyon, Duncan Dare started upon his return to Baltimore.

The little craft which he had chartered for the run down the Chesapeake, was very fleet, and he made good time upon his way back.

Kate had gone out with him, her surf-skiff towing astern, and after seeing him a league on his course, started upon her return.

The midshipman arrived in Baltimore just in time to catch the night stage to Philadelphia, and was soon sleeping comfortably as the lumbering vehicle went on its way.

Keeping steadily on he reached New York in good time and at once went on the brig-of-war and reported for duty.

The commander, Captain Carter Gray, had taken a great fancy to the boy, and had wished to have him a midshipman on his brig, the Tornado; but he congratulated Duncan upon his promotion, and told him that the Spitfire was being put in perfect trim, and he could go on board the next day and take charge until her commander arrived, adding:

"By the way, do you know who is to be her cap'n?"

"Yes, sir, I heard him spoken of as Lieutenant Burton Beverly, a South Carolinian."

"I know him, and a more dashing, daring fellow does not live."

"He was a midshipman in the Delaware flagship, when I was a lieutenant, and had not an enemy on board ship."

"He is as handsome as a picture, fearless, generous, and has superb control over men, while as a seaman he has few equals."

"You will like him, Midshipman Dare, I

know, and I congratulate you upon your commander; but here is a letter that came for you to-day."

"It is from my mother," said Duncan, glancing at the address, and breaking the seal, with a bow of apology to the captain, he began to read it.

Captain Gray saw him start and turn pale, and said, quickly:

"No bad news, I hope, Dare."

"I will read you, sir, what my mother says, if you will allow me."

"With pleasure."

"Then Duncan Dare read as follows:

"HAMPTON HALL."

"MY OWN DEAR SON:—You will be surprised to see my letter dated from Hampton Hall, but I am here now for a few days, as I have no home now, the farm-house having been destroyed by fire last night.

"The squire and Jessie forced me to accompany them home, for they drove over in their carriage to the fire, and I will remain until this afternoon, when I go to the tavern in the village, to live until I rebuild our home, for I shall do so at once.

"Poor dear old home, it is but a heap of ashes now, but Phoenix-like, out of its ashes a new mansion shall spring, and one worthy to be inherited by my distinguished sailor boy.

"But let me tell you of the burning, and all else connected with it, and you will see that you have to be on your guard against peril of a treacherous nature.

"After having seen you out to sea in the schooner as you remember, we returned home, and I kept the squire and Jessie to tea with me.

"They left early for home, and I, being tired, went to my room.

"Liza put away the tea things, and then went to bed, and Dan had gone to the village on an errand for himself.

"I was sleeping soundly, and it seemed to me that I had the nightmare, for I could not awaken, and I distinctly heard the crackling of burning wood, and beheld the flames.

"At last Dan darted into my room and aroused me.

"There was a brilliant red glare in my room, and I realized, without his telling me, that the house was on fire.

"He darted out to arouse the farm-hands, and I arose and hastily dressed, while Liza acted splendidly, and we got together the silver, my papers and other things of value.

"I ran out of the house and saw that it was impossible to save it, and also realized that it had been the work of an incendiary, for under the southern piazza, the east porch and the west wing had been piled light wood and hay, and then set on fire, the house had been quickly enveloped in flames.

"The village bells were ringing, and I could hear the rumble of wheels approaching, and the cries of fire upon all sides, as people hurried to the spot.

"Then the farm-hands rushed up to me and told me that the incendiary had killed your beautiful dog, Savage.

"Next came news that poor Dan had been found, badly wounded, and grasping in his hand a broken sword.

"I ran to his side and found that he was indeed badly wounded.

"I stanchd the blood as best I could, and just then Doctor Doane, who had been on a visit to a patient, and was passing, drove up.

"We carried Dan into the farm-lodge, and Doctor Doane dressed his wounds.

"Fearful that Dan might die, Doctor Doane called Constable Kane and they had him tell the story of what he knew about the affair.

"He said he had returned from the village and gone to his room; but he could not sleep.

"At last he heard a sound outside, and ran to see what it was, when Savage barked furiously and dashed around the house.

"Then he saw a bright glare without, and rushing into my room he aroused me, and then Liza, after which he ran out doors.

"He was terribly frightened, he said, at seeing the house on fire in three different places, but just then saw a man standing not far away, and he determined to attempt to capture him.

"Seizing a stick he rushed upon him, but was met with a broken sword, and was twice severely wounded, while the man turned away.

"He told him he was Captain Carl the Corsair, and that he had come to strike his first blow of revenge against you."

"Captain Carl! then he is not dead!" cried Captain Gray, springing to his feet.

"So it seems, sir, unless he was killed that night, but my mother will doubtless tell," and Duncan Dare resumed his letter, though his face was very pale, and his voice quivered a little in spite of his effort to control it.

"Having told poor Dan who he was, Captain Carl darted away, leaving his broken sword in Dan's hands, for he held to it firmly, and the pirate had to leave, as he saw the farm-hands approaching.

"He ran down toward the inlet, Dan said; but as he had had a good start before it was known, when Constable Kane mounted his horse in pursuit, he found that your cat-rig cabin boat, the Jessie, was gone.

"She had just been fitted up for a run to New London, for I had loaned her to Captain Hiram

Rogers for a few days, and he was to come after her the next morning.

"Riding rapidly to the shore, Constable Kane saw the Jessie going out through the breakers, and heading as though to run the coast to New York, so he dashed back to the farm, and told me he would ride hard to Babylon, get a craft there and head the pirate off, and I hope that he will do so; but a storm came up before dawn, and if Captain Carl was alone he may have been lost."

"No danger of that, for Satan takes care of his own," said Captain Gray.

Resuming his letter, Duncan Dare read:

"Poor Dan is in desperate danger, and yet there is hope for him, and I have told Doctor Doane to remain by him night and day.

"As for the house, it is in ashes, as I said; but I saved my valuables, your father's portrait, and a few little souvenirs that were in your room.

"All the rest is a total loss, but I have ample funds in bank to rebuild the house, and it shall be begun at once.

"But Duncan, my son, beware of that man Captain Carl, for he managed to escape when you all deemed him slain, and though flying for his life, he struck you a bitter blow, and he will still seek to harm, yes to kill you.

"He may be without a vessel or a crew, and yet he is not one to be despised, and I beg of you not to let him end your young life by some act of treachery.

"Jessie sends a letter of condolence within, and the squire will write you, and says leave no stone unturned to capture Captain Carl, should the constable fail in doing so, for he is sure he will make for New York."

"The advice of your mother and the squire, Duncan, must be followed.

"You can take a crew at once, and go in search of that daring fellow, for somehow I believe he will escape the constable.

"While you take the little ten-ton cutter and a dozen men, and go down New York Bay, I will cruise through the Sound in search of him, for he may not have run up the Atlantic coast, but rounded Montauk and come up the Sound, as he doubtless would, being alone, for then he would have plenty of havens into which he could run and rest himself."

"But he may not be alone, sir, and, doubtless, if he escaped that night, others of his crew did."

"You are right, he is doubtless not alone, so go prepared to meet a stronger resistance," said Captain Gray, and an hour after a pretty little sloop, having on board a six-pound brass piece, a dozen tars, and Duncan Dare as commander, sailed down New York harbor in search of Captain Carl, the fugitive pirate.

CHAPTER X.

TRICKED.

"WELL, I've got to battle with a storm, that is certain, and I do not like the idea, wounded as I am," said Captain Carl, as he headed his little boat northeast, after he had run out of the inlet.

Had the constable waited an instant, he would have seen the pirate change his course, and, by riding to Sag Harbor, could have gotten a craft to head him off, instead of going as he did to Babylon on the Atlantic shore, believing that the fugitive was going along the coast to New York.

When Captain Carl made the remark that opens this chapter, he had nearly reached the end of Long Island, and was standing on, in the hope of rounding Montauk before the storm struck him.

It was his desire to do this, and find a haven on the Sound shore, that forced him to hold on to his full sail until the last, and the result was that he had not time to take in his canvas when the storm did strike, and his mast was snapped short off, and away went the wreck overboard.

To cut away the wreckage was but a moment's work, and then Captain Carl found himself driving up the Sound in a boat that had no mast, and was a wreck upon the waters.

"She'll be driven ashore somewhere, and I'll be on the very island I sought to escape from," he muttered.

But the wreck kept well out in the Sound, the storm blew over, it drifted back with the tide, and out to sea.

Thus several days passed away, and once more the wreck was borne by the tide into the Sound. Without an oar even, with which to make a jury-mast, the pirate had to see himself drifting helplessly about, and knew that some vessel must soon pick him up.

If it was a vessel-of-war his fate was sealed, he well knew.

If it was a Long Island fishing-boat, he felt that his danger of recognition would be almost as great.

Had the wreck been near the land, he would have sprung overboard and swam there, preferring to take his chances on shore to the sea.

At length, one morning as the sun arose he spied a vessel in sight.

She was coming slowly along, and must pass near him.

To his experienced eye the rig told him she was a vessel-of-war, and after a closer look he said:

"My God! it is the Tornado, and Carter Gray is her commander, and he knows me well."

"I have but one chance now in a thousand."

As he spoke he sunk back into the cockpit, and thus, with closed eyes, limp form and unconscious he was found half an hour after by the crew of the Tornado's boat that had boarded him.

It is as I supposed; he took the Sound course up to the city, and was dismayed in the storm of three nights ago.

"It is Carl Casandra," said Captain Gray.

"And he is insensible, sir," said the surgeon.

"Yes, he is as you see, wounded, and his face shows that he has suffered much, while he has doubtless been overcome by the hardships he has endured."

"It is better for him, if he never recovers; but you must do what you can, surgeon, as he must not cheat the yard-arm, if in your power to save him for it."

"Now, back to New York we go."

The brig was put about and headed up the Sound on her return to her anchorage in New York harbor.

Captain Carl, to receive better attention, had been taken into the captain's cabin, and placed in a state-room.

But all day long he lay in an unconscious state.

The surgeon did all that his skill could suggest to restore him to consciousness, but in vain.

The pirate breathed hard, his limbs were limp, and he seemed to have no feeling.

The wound in his arm was found to have been made by a bullet, and probing for the ball the surgeon found it, and extracted it, while he remarked to Captain Gray:

"He seems dead to all pain, sir, and will doubtless die without regaining consciousness."

"Ah! here is another wound in his side; but it is slight, and made by the point of a sword."

"See, it was struck up, as you see by the cut, before it could penetrate."

Both wounds were then carefully dressed, and some medicine was forced into the mouth through the clinched teeth; but still the pirate lay in his deep sleep, and the skill of the surgeon was unable to arouse him.

It was just after sunset that the Tornado dropped anchor in the old harborage, and soon after the little sloop, in which Duncan Dare had sailed, ran up near and let fall her hook.

Captain Gray was pacing the deck, for the cabin was warm and uncomfortable, and hailing Dare, asked him to come at once on board.

"Did you find your man, Dare?" he asked, as the midshipman joined him on the quarter-deck.

"No, sir," and I am confident that he either did not come up the coast, from all inquiries I made of in-coming vessels, or was lost in the storm."

"We have been more fortunate, Dare."

"Ah!"

"Yes, we found Captain Carl adrift in your boat Jessie, which had been dismayed in the storm."

"Thank Heaven you have him safe!" ejaculated the youth.

"As I thought, he took the Sound course, and when dismayed, drifted about at the mercy of wind and tide."

"I took the little wreck in tow, and it will be as good as ever for you, when you have another mast put in."

"It was good of you, sir, for I prize the Jessie most highly; but the prisoner?"

"We found him in an unconscious condition, and I had him placed in my cabin, where the surgeon has been at work on him all day."

"He had two wounds, a pistol-shot in his arm, and a slight sword-cut on the breast; but he still remains in that unconscious condition, which he had when we discovered him, and he has doubtless passed through enough to kill him."

"After all his crimes, sir, I hope he may not die and thus cheat the gallows."

"Are you sure that he is really unconscious?"

"How do you mean?"

"He is not feigning unconsciousness?"

"Egad, that's a new idea; but, sir, he was that way when we found him, and he did not flinch at the probe and extracting the bullet."

"I cannot see, sir, what could get him into this state, for he is a man of iron constitution, he had food on the Jessie, and his wounds were not serious, so—"

"By Jove, Dare, you give me a new idea, and I will have the surgeon try another way to rouse him."

"Mr. Leonard, send the surgeon to me in the cabin at once."

"Come, Dare!" and Captain Gray descended to the cabin.

The lamp burned brightly, and walking to the port state-room, which had been given to the pirate, Captain Gray uttered an exclamation that was mingled with profanity, for *Captain Carl was gone!*

One of the stern ports was open, and a rope hung from it to the water, the end being fastened to a cleat inside the cabin.

"Dare, you are right! that man was playing possum to trick us, and he did so most cleverly."

"If I catch him again I shall hang him at once," and the surgeon coming in was horrified when told how cleverly he had been tricked by the cunning Corsair.

CHAPTER XI.

THE JEW AND THE CORSAIR.

WHEN Captain Carl made the remark, at the time of his discovering the brig-of-war, that his chances were one in a thousand, he quickly played his cards to win that one chance.

He knew that his surroundings, his wounds and all were in favor of his being found in a deplorable condition, far from what he really was.

So he had sunk back in the cockpit, and then nerving himself to play his bold part, he pretended to be in an unconscious state when the boat of the brig came alongside.

He was certainly believed to be unconscious and the surgeon went to work on him.

His peril quickened his pulse, and he was considered in a comatose state by all.

The probing of his wound had given him great agony, but such was his nerve and self-control, that he had not flinched.

Thus the day passed away, night came, the cabin lamp was lighted, and Captain Carl knew that he was alone.

The anchor was dropped, the brig became stationary, and then the daring outlaw arose.

Glancing out into the cabin he saw that no one was there.

A coil of rope hung in his state-room, and seizing this he glided across the cabin to the open port, made the rope fast about a cleat, and quickly slipped down it into the water.

He did not know how far he was from the shore, and he did not care; all he wanted was to leave a vessel where a rope was about his neck.

Diving deep, he at last arose some distance from the brig, and again he dove, and again, until he was a cable's length away.

Then he looked about him.

The Brooklyn shore was not far away, but it was the New York shore where he wished to land, so he struck out for it with a bold stroke.

Just then a sloop passed him, making for the brig apparently.

The light from the companionway fell full upon a uniformed person standing by the helmsman.

"It is that accursed boy!" he gritted through his teeth, and he sunk below the surface.

When the sloop passed on he again swam shoreward, and soon landed near a pier above Fulton street.

Cautiously he left the water, and walking into a Jew's shop, where were all kinds of old clothing, he said sharply:

"I want a suit of clothes, Jew."

"You vas all wetted," said the Jew, gazing at the dripping uniform.

"Yes."

"You vas tumble overboard, maybe."

"Yes."

"You vas lucky that you don't trown, mine fri'nt."

"Do you intend to show me what I wish, or not?"

"Ah, mine fri'nt, I vill so very quick."

"Vat vas you wants in t'e vay of clothes?"

"Give me a civilian's suit, and new if you have them, with a slouch hat—yes, give me a dress that will pass for a Southern planter, and if you have any disguise, let me see it."

"I vas have a fine suit of a Southern blanter, mine fri'nt; it vas belong to a young mans that vas come here rich, put he vas gamble too mooch, lose all his monish, and then he plow his prains out quick at his hotel, so I puy's his clot'ing."

"Let me see what you have of his."

"It vas all in that troonk, mine fri'nt," and the Jew pointed to a small trunk, and throwing it open, Captain Carl saw within shirts, neckties, boots, several suits of clothes, some slouch hats, a cloak, a cane, and some underwear.

"It is just what I need, for if the hats fit, the clothes I know will, and the boots doubtless also will."

"What do you want for the lot?"

"One hundred dollars, mine fri'nt."

"Here is your money, in gold; but, tell me, have you a disguise of any kind?"

"A mask?"

"No, but something that will hide my face as well."

"I have a good peard, mine fri'nt."

"Let me see it."

The beard was brought, and being blonde, aided in thoroughly disguising the face, which a wig of like hue wholly completed.

"Send me a barber, Jew, to have my hair cut short," said Captain Carl.

"I vas do t'e pizziness mineself," and the Jew got his shears.

In a short while the brown locks of the pirate were cut off, and dressed in the planter's suit of gray, the light slouch hat, and with his blonde wig and beard, not even the keen eyes of Duncan Dare would have known him.

"Mind you, Jew, no word of this change," he said, sternly.

"Oh, mine fri'nt, I vas dumb; put if you wants to sell your things again, I vas give you liberal monish for dem."

"All right; but have you fire-arms?"

"I have fine pistols, mine fri'nt."

"Let me see them."

A pair of handsome pistols were brought, in a mahogany case, velvet lined, and the weapons were mounted with silver.

"I will take these; but have you a knife?"

The Jew saw that his customer was not one to ask the price of anything, so he brought him out a jewel-hilted dagger.

"This is a fine weapon, and will do."

"How much do I owe you?"

"One hundred and fifty tollars."

"Here is your money—no, I have not so much, for my money has given out; but I have some jewels here you may be able to give me gold for."

"The Jew's eyes sparkled as the pirate took out a small buckskin bag and poured out upon the table a dozen fine gems."

"Give me the gold for these two diamonds," he said, picking up two of the largest.

"They is worth five hundred tollars apiece, mine fri'nt."

"They are worth just as much more, Jew, and I know it."

"I want two thousand dollars for them."

"I will give you fifteen hunder tollars, mine fri'nt."

"Not a cent under two thousand will I take, and then you will make a couple of hundred on each, as you know."

"Well, mine fri'nt, I will gif you te monish you wants, and I hopes you vill come pack to me again."

"I will, if you act square with me: but tell me, do you buy goods of all kinds?"

"Everything, mine fri'nt."

"Suppose some articles should have a stain on them, what then?"

"Vat color?"

"Red."

"Plood, maybe?"

"Yes."

"Plood vashes off, mine fri'nt."

"Then I will know to whom I can come, and you are convenient to the water here, so expect to see me again."

"Your name, Jew?"

"Saul Seixas, mine fri'nt."

"Mister Saul Seixas, I shall not forget you."

"Send the trunk to the City Hotel, and paste a paper on it with my name."

"What vas your name, mine fri'nt?"

"Ah, I had forgotten: let me see, call me Doctor Carlton," and, having received his money for the two gems, Captain Carl departed from the Jew's shop swinging a cane in his hand, which he had also purchased as an addition to his make-up.

Going straight to the City Hotel, then a fashionable inn, he registered his name as

"C. CARLTON M. D.
Louisiana."

and saying that his baggage would soon arrive, asked to be shown to as good quarters as the house could give him.

Soon after his baggage arrived, and worn out with what he had undergone the past few days, he sought the rest he so much needed, and was soon sleeping as sweetly as though grim phantoms of his crimes were not ever near to haunt his life, and accuse his conscience with his wicked deeds.

CHAPTER XII.

A STRANGE MEETING.

"CLERK, who is that gentleman?" asked Captain Carl, the afternoon following his arrival at the City Hotel, as he beheld a tall man, *distingue* in appearance, dressed most fashionably, and with a strongly stamped face pass out into the street.

"That gentleman, Doctor Carlton, is a South Carolina planter, who is as rich as a prince."

"His rooms are near yours, and the very best we have in the house, and they say he is the luckiest man that ever staked money on a card, for he plays now and then I have heard."

"Ah! and he is from South Carolina you say?"

"Yes, doctor."

"What did you say his name was?"

"Ah! I forgot to tell you; it is Colonel Merton Regnier."

"Indeed! I have heard of him," and the pirate strolled off to his room.

He had tested his disguise by daylight and found it perfect, and he had passed the morning in purchasing certain articles he needed.

In the afternoon, having dined, he sat down on the piazza, for the New York taverns of that day had such luxuries, kind reader, and was enjoying a cigar, when the South Carolina planter had passed near him.

He had started, sprung to his feet and advanced toward the stranger; but checking his seeming intention of speaking to him walked up to the desk and asked the clerk regarding the person.

The result seemed to satisfy him, for he went to his room with a strange smile upon his face.

After dark the pirate dropped into the theater, and from there wended his way to Fulton street, where, at that time, was located the most fashionable gambling saloon in the city.

The clerk at the hotel had given him a card of introduction, for the place was exclusive in the extreme and admitted no one not introduced, and he readily passed the porter and was ushered into the brilliantly-lighted chambers, some half dozen in number.

They were furnished with rare elegance and taste, fine paintings adorned the walls, soft sofas and chairs lured to repose, and a side-board, glittering with silver and cut glass invited one to partake of wines and liquors, while a refreshment table, filled with delicacies stood near.

There were a score of card tables, and all occupied, a game of *monte*, another of *roulette* a third of *rouge et noir*, and several chance games that were sure to win for the bank and not for the player.

As Captain Carl sauntered about the room his eyes fell upon the tall form of the South Carolina planter.

He was not playing, but stood idly watching a game, and taking his stand near him, the pirate said, with a bow and smile:

"Pardon me, sir, but would you be willing to play a game of cards with one who is a stranger to you?"

"Certainly, sir, though I do not often play, and I warn you that my luck is great."

"My name is Merton Regnier, sir; I am a planter and a South Carolinian."

"I am glad to meet you, Colonel Regnier, for so I heard you addressed."

"My name is Doctor Carlton, and I too am a Southerner, hailing from Louisiana."

"We will find a table in the little blue room yonder," and the two walked in that direction.

It was a cosy little room; and a servant brought cards, brandy and glasses, and they sat down to play, the pirate dealing.

The first game was for a stake of a hundred dollars, and the result was that Captain Carl was the winner.

"I see my luck has not begun with the game."

"Suppose we increase the stakes to double," said Mr. Regnier, with a pleasant smile.

"I am willing, sir."

The next game ended as had the first, with the pirate the winner.

"Will you double the stakes again, sir?" asked Mr. Regnier.

"Certainly."

The third game but increased the pirate's winnings.

"Suppose we double the stakes each game, Doctor Carlton?" said the South Carolinian, with no show of uneasiness at his losses.

"As you please, Mr. Regnier."

"Then it is sixteen hundred we play for this game?"

"Yes, sir."

"The money is yours, doctor, and next game is for thirty-two hundred."

"Yes."

"You still win, Doctor Carlton; but I may yet have a turn in the tide."

"It is sixty-four hundred now."

"It is."

"And you win once more."

"I really like this doubling the stakes, for it adds zest to the game, so now we play for twelve thousand eight hundred dollars."

"You are right, sir."

"And I win," was the cool reply of the South Carolinian.

The pirate flinched, for he saw luck was turning.

"Now, sir, it is twenty-five thousand six hundred we play for, I believe?" said the South Carolinian, in the easiest manner possible.

"Yes," sternly answered the pirate, though he knew he had nothing like that sum with him.

"Again I win, doctor, and again we double, if you say so?"

"Let me see; I have not a very large sum of money with me, but I have some gems here worth fully fifty thousand, so I will place them against your fifty thousand dollars."

And the pirate took out his little bag of gems.

"They are fine stones, evidently selected, and are worth just a little over the sum," said Mr. Regnier, with the air of one who knew what he was talking about.

"Well, sir, I will take out this one, and then the balance go against what I may owe you at the end of this game?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is that satisfactory, Colonel Regnier?"

"Wholly so, Doctor Carlton," was the smiling reply, and the game was begun.

Each man played slowly and cautiously, for they realized that a fortune was at stake.

At last, on the turn of a card, the South Carolinian won.

The pirate turned very pale for an instant, then his face flushed and a reckless look flashed through his eyes, while he said coolly:

"You are indeed most lucky, sir."

"I warned you that I was, Doctor Carlton."

"True, sir, but I am not one to ever heed warnings."

"Ah! it is nearly two o'clock, so I must be off."

"Do you go my way, Colonel Regnier?"

"Which way do you go?"

"To the City Hotel."

"Ah! then we are guests at the same house, for I am stopping there."

"Shall we go together?"

"Yes, sir, with pleasure."

And arm in arm, like the best of friends, the two men left the saloon and wended their way to the hotel together.

In the office they bade each other good-night, and, with a hope that they would meet again, the South Carolinian went to his room.

He had just put on his dressing-gown, smoking-cap and slippers, for a quiet smoke, late as was the hour, when there came a knock at his door.

In surprise he arose and went to it, for he always kept it securely locked.

"Ah! Doctor Carlton, walk in, sir, and have a cigar and some brandy and water with me."

"Thank you, sir, I will, for I came up to have a little talk with you."

"I am delighted," and the South Carolinian motioned his guest to an easy-chair on one side of the table, while he dropped into another.

There was a decanter of brandy on the table, a box of cigars, a silver tankard of water, and a curiously carved pipe.

The rooms were large and handsomely furnished, and about them were a number of articles that proved the occupant to be the possessor of a refined taste.

A sip of brandy and a cigar, and the pirate said:

"Colonel Regnier, may I ask you a few question, without giving offense, if I explain afterward my motive?"

"Certainly, sir," was the reply, but the man seemed a trifle annoyed.

"What part of South Carolina, sir, may I ask, is your home located?"

"Not very far from Charleston, on the coast."

"May I ask if you know a Maryland planter by the name of Cyle Kenyon?"

The South Carolinian slightly started, but answered:

"Yes, sir, I know such a gentleman."

"He lives on the shores of the Chesapeake, does he not?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am anxious to know if it is true that his daughter was engaged to marry a man whom she knew to be a pirate?"

"My dear Doctor Carlton, I do not know what motive you have for these questions, and presume that you will, as you said, explain them in the end."

"But I will tell you that Miss Kate Kenyon was engaged to me, sir, but she ran off and married a pirate who had once been an officer of the navy, and who was killed on Long Island a week ago."

"What became of his bride?"

"That I do not know, nor do I care, after her desertion of me."

"Doubtless you feel bitterly toward her, Colonel Regnier."

"I cannot help it, sir, and she deserves it for her giving me up for a pirate," and it was very certain that the South Carolinian felt deeply angered and annoyed at the part his intended bride had played.

"Now, colonel, may I ask if you are not a very rich man?"

"Yes, sir, I will tell you that I am, though why you desire the knowledge I cannot understand."

"Did you make it all by piracy, Colonel Regnier?"

The eyes of the South Carolinian flashed fire, and he said sternly:

"Do I understand that you intend to insult me, sir?"

"Colonel Regnier, don't get excited, for it will do you no good, for I know you well, sir."

"You know me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who am I?" and the man was getting a dangerous look in his eyes.

"Your name is Regnier; yes, Merton M. Regnier, and you own a plantation on the coast near Charleston, and you are a very rich man."

"But I am aware that your former home was Baltimore, and there you went under your middle name of Marks, dropping the Merton Regnier."

"Now, Mr. Marks, I am aware that you deceived Mr. Kenyon, and his daughter, as to who you are; but you cannot deceive me."

"By Heaven, sir, but you are making strange charges against me, and you shall eat your insulting words," hissed the South Carolinian.

"No, Marks, I will do nothing of the kind; but you will do something, for you will furnish the money I need for a certain purpose, for you are amply able to do it."

"Do you dare tell me I will give you money for some work you need it for?"

"I do say so, and you will."

"The truth is, I wish to buy a fine schooner for a flag that I intend cruising under, and I have not the money."

"I sought to win gold to-night, but lost, for I am unfortunate in my gambling, though successful in my cruising under the black flag—"

"Ha! a self-acknowledged pirate!"

"I will at once have you arrested," and the man arose excitedly.

"Marks, sit down."

"No, sir!"

"Sit down I say; or if you wish to call an officer do so, and you will go with me to jail, for I have proof that you are a pirate, while you have only my word for it, which I will deny having said."

"Now will you sit down, Marks?"

The man dropped into a chair and Captain Carl continued:

"Now, Marks, I wish to fit out my vessel, and I can buy the craft for fifteen thousand dollars."

"Her extra rig, armament, and fitting out will cost ten thousand more, and then I need to ship a crew, and in all I will need, say fifty thousand dollars."

"As you won from me that sum to-night you will not miss it; but I must have the money."

"No, sir."

"I say yes."

"Not from me."

"Yes, from you."

"What do I get, if I give you the money?"

"How do you mean?"

"What interest in your prizes?"

"Not one dollar, other than what I choose to give you."

"I will never give you a dollar, for what do I know about your capacity as a commander?"

"You must take that on faith."

"Not a dollar do you get from me."

"If this is your decision, Mr. Marks, I shall send for an officer, have you arrested, send to Baltimore for the man you left in charge of your affairs there, and, by your own papers, which are in my hands, I will send you to the gallows."

"Now, Marks, will you give me the sum I ask you for, or refuse it?"

The man was deeply moved and he felt that his visitor held the advantage of him.

At last he said:

"I will buy a schooner for you, the one you wish, and fit her out fully, making you her captain, on condition we have equal shares in the booty, after the expenses are paid and the men get their prize money."

"No, Marks, we can make no such terms, for I hold the key of the situation, and you have either to decide now in favor of my demand, or go to prison as a pirate."

"Come, Marks, what do you say?"

"I can but yield to a robber who has me in his power."

"You yield gracefully, Marks, and I am glad you have not forced me to go to extremes."

"Now count me out the money and I will be off; but we will meet again, for if I get broke, or have ill fortune, I may drop into your down-town office to get you to stake me again."

"My down-town office?" fairly gasped the man.

"Yes, for I know where it is, as well as I do that you are playing a double game in this city, for no one would recognize in Marks the money-lender, the elegant Colonel Regnier of South Carolina."

"Now let me have my money, and I will leave you to your thoughts."

The South Carolinian uttered an oath, counted out his money, pushed the sum demanded to the pirate, and then pointed to the door.

With a light laugh Captain Carl arose and took his departure, giving the man Marks a mock bow as he left the room.

With a loud snap the bolts were shot after him, and the pirate uttered a light laugh that evidently reached the ears of the man whom he had forced to give to him a small fortune.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PIRATE'S PLAN.

THE pirate schooner Spitfire was undergoing a thorough overhauling.

She had been taken into the dock and her hull had been put in perfect condition, after which she was painted, new spars were added, several guns put on board replaced some that were not in the best condition, and in about two weeks' time she was in readiness for sea, and only awaiting the coming of her commander and her crew, who were to be sent on from Washington.

Learning that there would be some delay in their coming, Captain Gray had granted Duncan Dare leave to go down to see his mother, whom the youth was anxious about, since the burning of her home, and, as he could find no trace of the fugitive pirate he had been glad of the opportunity to go.

After the departure of the pirate from his room that night, Merton Regnier paced to and fro in deep thought.

He was a man that had never before met his match, and he felt that he had been coolly robbed by one whom he did not dare refuse.

Having been worsted, he was determined upon revenge, and with one knowing who he really was, he was anxious to get rid of that one.

He never allowed his most intimate companion to know him as he was, for he kept his own secrets, and he made up his mind to discover in the morning all about the handsome blonde sailor calling himself Doctor Carlton, and who knew so much about him.

"I shall put spies upon his every movement," he said, to himself, and, with this intention he sought his couch to sleep.

At his usual hour he awoke and went down to breakfast.

At the office he asked if Doctor Carlton was yet up, and, to his dismay the answer was:

"The doctor departed hours ago, sir."

"Not gone?"

"Yes, sir."

"But when and where?"

"He took the early stage for Philadelphia, sir."

Colonel Regnier hastened out without his breakfast, and returned in an hour with a satisfied look, for he had dispatched a couple of de-

tectives in a private conveyance to follow the stage and dog the steps of Doctor Carlton.

But the next day they returned with the information that Doctor Carlton had not gone in the stage as they had discovered upon overtaking it, and the driver said he had entered it at the hotel, and left it at the ferry.

More they could not ascertain, and Colonel Regnier was forced to put his own secret service men to find out what had become of the mysterious man.

In the mean time the fugitive pirate had suspected he would be dogged by the man Marks, and so he took a seat in the Philadelphia stage, left it at the Jersey ferry, and sent his luggage to the shop of the Jew, Saul Seixas.

Thither he soon after followed it.

"Ah, mine fri'nt, does you vant to sell dose clothes again?"

"No; but I wish to buy more, and to look up another disguise."

"That vas easy, mine fri'nt."

"Well, get me a disguise equally as good as this, and then I wish to talk to you about purchasing for me a schooner that is being fitted out at the Government yards."

"Vell, I vas puy t'e vessels if you vas tells me; but, if you vant a vessels pad, you gets him without t'e monish."

"How so, Jew?"

"Take him."

"Ah! you give good advice; but by the way, where am I to get a crew?"

"Dere vas von birate vessels that vas have some crew mans on board."

"Ha! the Spitfire?"

"Yesh, mine fri'nt."

"You are right, there are fully thirty-five fellows there, who are waiting trial for piracy."

"They have been kept in the arsenal during the fitting out of the schooner, and to-day were to be returned on board of her, as she is ready for sea; but the brig-of-war lies at anchor with the Spitfire under her guns, and she cannot be cut out," and Captain Carl hastily reviewed the situation as it was.

"Mine fri'nt, t'e prig-of-war could pe made to go away."

"By Jove you are right, Jew, she would run off if certain inducements I know of were offered."

"That vas so, mine fri'nt."

"But, Jew, I need more men."

"That vas easy."

"You know how I can get them?"

"Yesh, I deals in mens."

"You buy men, and sell them, as you do old clothes?"

"Yesh, mine fri'nt, I p'ys and sells every-ting."

"And you can get me some fine fellows?"

"Yesh."

"Sailors only."

"Yesh."

"Men not afraid to die."

"That ish vat you vants."

"Say thirty."

"Ash many as you bleases."

"When?"

"When you vant dem?"

"To-night."

"I get dem ready."

"You will want money?"

"Yesh."

"Well, here is gold for you, and if you need more tell me."

"The less you rob me of, Jew, the more you will make out of me in the end; but cheat me, and if I catch you, it ends our business together."

"That vas so, mine fri'nt; put I don't vas cheat you."

"See that you don't, and now hunt me up that disguise, for I would like to go over to the Government yards."

"How vas army officer uniform do?"

"It would do, I guess."

"It give you t'e entrance, if you say you vas a colonel and vants to look round t'e yards."

"You are right, so rig me up as a colonel."

The officer's uniform was soon donned, and remembering an army major not unlike himself in appearance, and who he knew was stationed up on the Lakes with his regiment, Captain Carl assumed his name, and calling a ferry started for the Government ship yards.

His uniform got him admission, and giving his name and supposed rank, he asked to look around the yards, and especially had he curiosity to see the captured pirate craft, for he said he had know Carl Casandra well in their boyhood days.

A naval lieutenant escorted him about the yards, and then on board the Spitfire.

"She seems in perfect trim," said the pirate.

"She is, sir, and ready to sail at any minute."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir, she only waits the coming of her officers and crew."

"When are they expected?"

"By to-morrow night, I think."

"Who is to command her?"

"Lieutenant Burton Beverly, a dashing young officer."

"He brings his crew with him?"

"Yes, sir, they are detached from a line-of-battle ship in the Potomac."

"Some fifty men, I suppose?"

"About thirty, I believe, sir, she will have for the present."

"And will she cruise south?"

"She goes first to Baltimore, colonel, to deliver up to a vessel-of-war there, the pirate prisoners now on board."

"Are there many of these?"

"Thirty-two, sir."

"I thank you, sir," and inviting the communicative young officer to dine with him at his hotel the next day, the pretended army officer took his leave.

"I have formed my plan of action, and it must succeed; but first to get that brig-of-war Tornado out of the way."

So saying he went back to the Jew and said:

"Jew, I want a bold fellow that I can trust to do some work for me."

"Yesh."

"Do you know such a man?"

"Yesh, I knows him."

"Then send him here at once."

"You go in here, mine fri'nt, for it vas my brivate office, and I cooms pack pretty quick."

"Here, Manuel, you vas look after t'e store for me."

So saying the Jew ushered Captain Carl into a private room, that was by no means in keeping with the surroundings of the shop, for it was comfortably, almost luxuriously furnished.

Motioning him to a chair, and placing a decanter and glass by him, the Jew departed, but soon returned, accompanied by a man in sailor garb, and with a bold, shrewd face.

"Dis mans, mine fri'nt, vas t'e mans you vants," said the Jew.

"Sit down, my man, and tell me if you are afraid to go on a dangerous errand."

"I am not afraid to do anything, sir, if it pays well," was the response.

"Well, it shall pay you handsomely, but you will take big risks."

"I have taken chances with death all through life."

"Well, I want you to go and get you a small cat-rig boat."

"Then toward dark sail up the East river to the brig-of-war Tornado, at anchor off the Government yards."

"I know where she lies."

"Board her, and tell her captain that you know where the pirate Carl is hiding."

"Tell him that he is with a band of smugglers known as the Hawks of the Hook, and you can lead him to their secret retreat."

"But I cannot."

"That matters not, only tell him so, and when you land, with a party from the brig, make your escape in some way, and leave them to find their way back as best they can."

"Yes, sir."

"You understand just what I say?"

"I do."

"And what I wish you to do?"

"Yes, sir."

"You will undertake it?"

"I will, sir."

"Name your price?"

"Two hundred dollars."

"Here is a hundred down, and the Jew will give you the balance when you have accomplished your work."

"Keep him posted of your movements, and if you wish to see service in the future I will give you a berth."

"I do, sir, wish to see service, for it is dull work hanging around the towns."

"All right, my man, so get your boat and be at the brig on time."

"I'll not fail you," said the man, and he left the room, the Jew reappearing soon after.

"Have you got the men, Jew?"

"Yesh, captain—thirty-three men, all goot."

"Well, I will need them soon after dark to-night, and they must all be well armed with cutlasses and pistols."

"I sells them t'e weepens, mine fri'nt."

"All right, and see that you have them ready, and I want no drunkards in the party."

"Now I will need a couple of boats, some navy uniforms, and one for myself."

"You shall have all t'e t'ings, mine fri'nt."

"See that I do, Jew, for I shall return by nightfall," and the pirate left the store of Saul Seixas, who was congratulating himself on having met a man so liberal with his gold as was the stranger, whom he had accidentally come across through his coming into his dingy little shop.

CHAPTER XIV.

CUT OUT.

WATCHING how matters were going, Captain Carl congratulated himself upon the way his plans were working, when he saw a small sail-boat from the lower bay run up near the Tornado, and, after being hailed, go alongside.

Its occupant was the sailor whom he had employed for the duty of sending the brig-of-war off on a wild goose-chase, and it was but a short while before the pirate saw that the bait was taken, for the vessel soon showed a scene of busy movement, her sails were set, her anchor run up, and away she started upon her trip down to the place where the strange seaman had told Captain Gray he could capture for him Carl the Corsair, along with a band of smugglers who were known as the Hawks of the Hook.

This daring band of outlaws moved in such a mysterious way, in all their actions, that large rewards were offered for the capture of each one of them, dead or alive, and yet all the vigilance of the Harbor Guard boats, and the cruisers, had never brought in a single member of the Hawks of the Hook as a prisoner.

Some said they were actually pirates, others, that they were only smugglers, while some asserted that they were both.

To find a man willing to betray them was a wonderful thing, and Captain Gray lost no time in getting his vessel under way.

Having, by his clever ruse, gotten the Tornado out of the way, Captain Carl waited at the rendezvous for the coming of his crew, and as he stood on a deserted pier, the Jew suddenly approached.

"Oh, Jew, it is you, is it?"

"You move as softly as a cat, but you should never approach a hunted man as you did, for your life might be the forfeit," and Captain Carl took his hand off of his pistol, where he had placed it, when the Jew touched him on the arm.

"Mine gracious jimminy! you vas scared me wid your words, mine fri'nt, and I don't vas forget any more; but t'e poats ish ready."

"And the men?"

"Vas ready, too."

"Good! where are they?"

"T'e poats?"

"Yes."

"In t'e vater mit t'e dock yonder."

"And the men?"

"In t'e poats."

"Are they in uniform?"

"They vas."

"And armed?"

"Mine gracious! put t'ey vas armed, mine fri'nt."

"Now let me put on my rig and be off."

"That vas so," and the Jew led the way to his shop.

In a short while Captain Carl came out in the dress of a lieutenant of the navy, and walked down to the deserted pier with the Jew.

There were two boats there, and they contained some thirty men, attired in sailor garb.

"Sailor mens, t'is gentlemans vas your captains, vat I tell you apout," said the Jew, by way of introduction.

"A good-evening to you, lads; and I have no doubt but that we will sail together pleasantly in company," said Captain Carl, in his frank, easy way, in which he always addressed a seaman.

To a man they saluted politely, while one of their number answered:

"It will be our fault, sir, if we do not, when we have such a pleasant captain."

"Ah! my fine fellow, you seem to have been kissing the Blarney stone, so treat your shipmates when you get the chance."

And Captain Carl tossed the man a purse heavy with gold.

A murmur of approbation arose from the men at this generous act of their new commander, and it was very easy to see that they were more than pleased with him.

"Now, lads, give way!"

"Jew, we will meet again, and soon, I hope; so be on the lookout for news from me."

"Give way!"

And Captain Carl, who had taken his seat in the stern of the largest of the two boats, issued the order in a tone that told the men he had seen salt water before.

Away from the pier, leaving the Jew standing there gazing after them, the boats went, and when well out upon the river, the pirate called the smaller one alongside.

"Men, I shipped you for hot work and good pay."

"There is a craft over here that I have taken a fancy to; and I am going to get it, and you are to aid me."

"She is fitted out for a long cruise, is armed and well equipped, and she is fleet as the wind, as I know, and as staunch as a line-of-battle ship."

"In her hold, held as prisoner, are a score and a half of gallant fellows, and I desire to set them free, after which I shall start on a cruise."

"Now you know my plans, and if there is any one of you who does not wish to go with me, let him speak now, and I will set him ashore, for I neither want an unwilling hand, or a coward!"

"Who speaks?"

Not a word was uttered against the expedition, and after waiting a moment, Captain Carl said:

"Men, I feel that I can depend upon you. Give way!"

Again the boats moved on their way, and they were headed for the Government yards upon the Brooklyn shore.

As the boats neared the schooner, which was now anchored out in a cove, half a cable's length from the shore, lights were visible on board, and a voice was heard, singing some pretty sea melody.

"Schooner ahoy!" suddenly hailed Captain Carl, when he saw their approach had not been noticed.

The song ceased suddenly, and then came the answer, in somewhat boyish tones:

"Ahoy, those boats!"

"Can I ask where the brig-of-war Tornado is lying?" asked Captain Carl.

"She has gone down the harbor in search of bloody pirates."

"Who are you?"

"The party of Lieutenant Beverly, from Washington, and intended for the schooner-of-war Spitfire."

"Oh! you are headed just right, for this is the craft."

"Come alongside!"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the pirate, and in another moment the two boats were alongside of the schooner, and springing on board, Captain Carl was followed by his men and greeted by a young midddy, who was officer in charge.

"Is this Lieutenant Beverly?" he asked, saluting.

"No, sir, I am Lieutenant Carlton, in command at present, as Lieutenant Beverly remains to-night in the city, but sent me over with the men."

"I am glad to welcome you, Lieutenant Carlton, and congratulate you upon the craft you are to sail in, for she's a dandy."

"I suppose now you will relieve me from duty?"

"Yes, sir, and your men."

"How many have you on board?"

"Only a dozen, sir."

"As a guard to the prisoners, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, sir, I will take command now."

"Then I will let the men go ashore in your boats, and—"

"Yes, let them return them to the Fulton street dock where we got them, and will you see to it?"

"Yes, sir, and be glad to get over to the city, even if it is late for the theater."

"I'll let some of the men land at the yard, with the kits of all, while I put a crew in the boats to take them back," and anxious to get off duty, the midddy quickly called his men together, turned the schooner over to the supposed naval officer, and was soon pulling away toward the New York shore.

But what was his amazement, to suddenly discover the schooner flying out of the cove under full sail, and heading up the East river toward Long Island Sound.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE PIRATES' TRACK.

THE man whom Captain Carl had engaged to deceive the commander of the Tornado, did his work well, for he piloted the brig to an anchor-

age under the shadows of the Highlands of Navesink, and there the boats were lowered and manned.

The pirate's hireling went in the leading boat with Captain Gray, and he led toward a landing on the Horseshoe.

"Do you mean to say that the smugglers have their hiding-place here on this part of the Hook?" asked Captain Gray, as the boats grounded on the beach.

"Yes, sir, and only the most experienced guide could find the way through this dense undergrowth," was the answer.

As the men all landed, the pretended guide said:

"Now, captain, if you'll let your men halt here, and look to their arms, I will see just where the path is that we are to follow, for it is not far away."

The captain made no objection, and the man glided away in the darkness.

Hardly had he disappeared, when Captain Gray said:

"By Jove! I should have sent a couple of men with the fellow, for somehow I do not trust him."

"Ho, my man!" he called out.

But no answer came, and Captain Gray did not care to risk calling out louder.

Then they waited, at first patiently, then with impatience, and at last, after two hours had passed and the man did not return, it dawned upon them all that they had been deceived, for some reason, yet why no one could guess.

So back to the brig they went, an angry party indeed, and the anchor was quickly gotten up and sail set.

Up the harbor went the Tornado at a ten-knot pace, through the Narrows, just as the sun was rising around Governor's Island, and up to her anchorage off the Government yards.

As she luffed sharp, to drop anchor, a boat put out from the shore.

It contained six oarsmen and the midshipman, who had been in charge of the Spitfire.

Signaling the brig in haste, Captain Gray did not give the order to let the anchor fall, but waited for the midddy to board.

He seemed very much excited, and told his story just as it had occurred.

"And are you sure it was not Beverly's party, sir, who started at once in the schooner on some secret service?"

"No, captain, for Lieutenant Beverly, and his crew just arrived at the yards, and went to report to the commandant, while I seeing the brig at once boarded you."

"By the Lord Harry! but that is why I was led off by that rascal last night."

"He got the brig cleverly out of the way, so that the schooner could get away."

"It was a most daring scheme, and the Spitfire is again in the hands of her former commander."

"Now to see Beverly, and find out just what we can do to retake the schooner," and Captain Gray hastily rowed ashore with the midddy, who was delighted to discover that he was not censured in the matter.

As they landed they met Lieutenant Beverly and the yard commandant, who had just heard of the return of the Tornado.

Burton Beverly was indeed a splendid specimen of manhood, and his manners were almost womanly in their gentleness, though his voice had the ring of a man born to command, and his face indicated courage and resolution in a marked degree.

"Well, captain, it seems I am stranded, as my schooner has been run off with most cleverly," he said.

"Yes, most daring and clever indeed, was that act of Carl the Corsair."

"It was he then, you think?"

"Certainly, for it is just like the man."

"Yes," said the commandant, "and I am confident that it was he who visited the schooner, and, pretending to be an army officer, was shown all over the craft."

"He got his points, and then acted boldly and successfully."

"And I shall give chase at once; but I wish we could get a vessel for Beverly."

"We can, for the new schooner is about ready, though the guns are not mounted; but I can give him additional men, store her at once and he can mount his guns and put things to rights as he sails."

"The very idea, commandant, and I will go down the harbor and out to sea, following the Long Island coast around until I meet Lieutenant Beverly off Montauk."

"He can take the sound down, putting into certain retreats where the pirate might hide,

and join me at Montauk, when we can compare notes, if neither of us have seen him, and then decide as to our future cruise in search of the rascal."

This plan was adopted, and Lieutenant Beverly and his men went at once on board of the new vessel.

It was a schooner of a hundred and sixty tons, built for speed and at the same time a heavy armament.

Her sails had been bent on but the day before, and her paint was yet fresh, and it was not supposed that she would be ready for sea for a week or more.

But the young lieutenant got his crew to work with a will, the guns were mounted, the ammunition placed in the magazine, the stores thrown on the deck, and the fine craft hauled out into the river before sunset.

Her sails were spread, but did not fit, and yet the vessel went along at a lively pace, while each piece of canvas was taken in hand by the sail-makers, and fitted in its turn.

The stores were being put in place by others of the crew, the guns were made fast in their places, the officers drilled some of the men in their duties, and the whole deck was a scene of busy animation.

"She is a beauty, certainly, and sails like a witch."

"Give us two days and I will not fear to meet her superior in guns and men," said Lieutenant Beverly as he gazed in admiration upon his beautiful vessel.

It was dark when the schooner glided into the waters of the sound, and though by far not in trim, had Captain Carl come upon her, he would have found her a dangerous foe.

Coming close inshore, now and then running into a cove, or inlet, the schooner held on down the shore, and at dawn was many miles on her way.

During the afternoon she stood in toward Sag Harbor, and saw a small coaster coming out.

Hailing the craft, the lieutenant asked if aught had been seen of an armed schooner in those waters, while he made known the fact that Captain Carl had cut out his vessel and escaped.

"No schooner has been seen, sir, such as you describe; but is that not the new schooner Vidette?" called out a clear voice.

"Ay, ay, it is."

"May I ask who is in command?"

"I am, Burton Beverly, lieutenant commanding."

"I am Midshipman Duncan Dare, sir, and I was just going up to the city on this packet to report to you, sir."

"Ay, ay, Mr. Dare, I am most glad to welcome you, for I have heard of you."

"Lower away a boat there, and bring Midshipman Dare on board," ordered Burton Beverly, and ten minutes after the young midddy grasped the hand of his commander.

"Mr. Dare, meeting you in this way is a god-send to me, for I have been congratulating myself upon having you for a junior officer, even since I heard you were ordered to join me, and I regretted it when Captain Gray said he had given you leave to run down home and see your mother, whom that wretch Carl the Corsair had burned out of house and home."

"He did, sir; but mother is plucky, and she is already rebuilding her home; but you say that Captain Carl has escaped?"

"He most certainly has" and Lieutenant Beverly told the lad all that had happened.

"I can help you on this island coast, sir, for I know just where a vessel can and cannot find a hiding-place; but my idea is that Captain Carl has not stopped here, but has gone at once to the Chesapeake, to carry out some more of his deviltry," and Duncan Dare told the story of Kate Kenyon's unfortunate love for the pirate.

"Well, we join the Tornado off Montauk, and, if Captain Gray has not caught the rascal, and we do not, I will take your view of the matter, Mr. Dare, and sail at once for the Chesapeake, for that lovely young lady you speak of must not again fall into his clutches."

So down to Montauk the schooner went, and soon after the Tornado was sighted, and the two dropped anchor in Big Pond, and Captain Gray boarded the Vidette for a consultation, for he wished to see into what trim Lieutenant Beverly had gotten his craft.

He was both amazed and delighted to see Duncan Dare on board, and said:

"Now, Beverly, you'll capture the pirate, for that lad will bring you luck."

"But it is useless to ask if you have seen the Corsair?"

"No, sir, nor heard of him, other than from a

fishing-smack that saw him pass down the Sound under a tremendous pressure of canvas."

"Yes, and he gained the sea and robbed a brig in sight of Montauk, and this was yesterday evening."

"I just parted with the brig when I saw your sail, and her skipper and his crew were so frightened that they do not know which way he went after robbing them, but they think he sailed southward."

"That chimes in with your idea, Dare, so south we go on his track," and Lieutenant Beverly made known what Duncan Dare had told him about the pirate.

"You are right, Duncan, my lad, for if there is a woman in the case, then look for the man, be he pirate or priest, and you'll find him in the Chesapeake."

"I only wish I could go with you, but my duties will keep me in the neighborhood of New York."

"Now, I will not detain you, for you must lose no time in following in the wake of Captain Carl the Corsair, as his craft leaves a ripple tinged with red."

Farewells were said, and a few minutes after the brig and the schooner were bowling merrily along, the former on her return to New York, the latter heading for Chesapeake Bay, and it was with delight that the officers and crew of the Vidette saw that they readily outsailed the fleet Tornado.

CHAPTER XVI.

A PIRATE'S BRIDE.

THE scene again changes to the shores of the Chesapeake, some ten days after the flight of the pirate schooner down Long Island Sound.

It is evening, just at sunset, and standing upon the cliff near Castle Kenyon mansion is Kate Kenyon.

Her face still wears its look of sadness, and her eyes are turned upon a distant sail coming up the bay at a brisk rate, for the wind is freshening with the going down of the sun.

The rays of sunlight falling upon the sails, give to them a rosy tint that is very beautiful, and the maiden seems to enjoy the beauty of the scene.

The vessel is too far off, and coming head on, for her to make out just what she is, but she can see that she sails well, and stands up well under the brisk breeze.

As twilight comes the vessel fades from view, and the maiden turns her steps toward the mansion.

Lights flash from the windows before she reaches the broad steps of the piazza, and she slowly enters, while a negro servant meeting her, says:

"Supper is ready, Missy Kate."

With a sigh Kate Kenyon enters the dining-room, but somehow the tempting repast set out before her does not tempt her appetite, and after a cup of tea and nibbling at a biscuit she leaves the table.

"I do wish father could be more at home now, and that brother King would return from England, for it is so lonesome here," she murmured, as she again went out upon the piazza.

It was starlight now, and dark, yet her eyes could soon take in the grounds about her and the waters of the bay.

"The vessel must be nearly opposite by this time, and I will go and see, for she looked to me like a vessel-of-war, and may be the schooner that that brave midgy was to sail in."

"A visit from him now would cheer me up, for he is a man in experience, if a boy in years."

Going into the hall she took up a shawl and throwing it about her shoulders, walked rapidly away toward the cliff.

She glanced down the bay, but her eyes fell upon no sail in sight.

Then she looked up the bay, and still no vessel caught her eye.

"How strange, for fast as she was sailing, she could not have gotten out of sight in this time," she said.

Then she took another position upon the cliff, and narrowly searched the waters.

Still no sail was in sight.

Looking down into the little harbor, she saw there only the pleasure craft belonging to the mansion.

"Well, this is strange, for the craft has disappeared as mysteriously as though she were a phantom."

"I will call up the boatman and ask him if he saw her pass."

"If not, she certainly put about and went down the bay again."

As she gave another look out over the waters

she turned, to suddenly behold that she was not alone.

With a moan she sunk down upon the ground, her limbs refusing to hold her weight; but, with a great effort she kept herself from swooning, and cried:

"Is it you, Carl Casandra, or your ghost?"

It was Captain Carl who stood before her, and the moon, just rising above the waters of the bay, fell full upon him.

He wore a new uniform, his arms were folded upon his broad breast, and he looked strangely handsome as he stood there in the light of the rising moon.

"I am in the flesh, Kate, not the spirit," he answered.

"Great God! I believed you dead," she gasped.

"And doubtless hoped so; but no, I am alive, well, the commander of my old vessel, which the United States Government most generously fitted out for me, and I am more in love with you than ever."

"Silence! do not dare tell me of your love, sir!"

"Ah Kate, I cannot but love you, and I cannot but tell you of it."

"So you escaped death, after all?"

"Yes, those whom Satan loves are hard to kill, I have found."

"I escaped, dealt my first blow of revenge upon that youth—"

"Ha! have you killed him?"

"I am sorry to say I have not; but I burned his house, and seeking flight, after sundry close calls for death, managed to reach New York city, where I got a crew and cut out my own vessel."

"Now, Kate, I have come to offer you terms."

"Terms?"

"Yes, for I am determined, if you do not be my loving bride, no other man shall claim you."

"What can you mean, Carl Casandra?"

"Simply that I am willing to leave you with in the hour, if you agree to what I demand."

"And that is?"

"That I pledge myself to at once sail from here, leaving you behind, if you will become my wife."

"No! no! no!"

"I have a priest on my vessel, which lies behind the point yonder, and he will unite us."

"I stopped at a small hamlet and got him to come with me for this purpose."

"If you marry me, I will sail at once, returning to my vessel with the priest; but if you refuse you shall go with me as a captive."

"Now you have your choice."

"But why should I buy my freedom from captivity at such a price from your hands, Carl Casandra?"

"That, as my wife, I have my revenge, for you can then not marry another."

"Ah! you little think how I shun the thought of matrimony."

"Will you do as I ask?"

"No."

"Be warned."

"I will not commit so great a sin."

"Well, you shall go as my captive."

"Never!"

As she spoke, she suddenly turned and bounded toward the cliff.

But he had anticipated just such an act, and he caught her in his strong arms before she could take the fatal leap.

"Ah, Kate, I have saved your life," he said, as he clung to her.

"Better that I had died, than be saved by you."

"No, no, there is no escape for you, as a call will bring my men, and, if you give an alarm by a scream, I shall simply put your home in ashes, and shoot down your slaves ruthlessly."

"Monster!"

"Call me names, my pretty Kate, only remember that I mean all I say."

"Kill me, I beg of you!" she cried, with piteous supplication.

"No. I will make you my wife, instead."

"Do you marry me, and remain here, the secret known to you, the priest and myself, or do you wish to go as my captive, until you are forced to come to my terms?"

She was silent a moment, and then said in a firm voice:

"Call your priest, and I will marry you."

He gave a shrill whistle, and soon after a form was seen approaching the cliff.

It was a priest, in his robes.

He came slowly along, and the moonlight fell upon his gray locks and benign face.

"Father, this is the lady of whom I spoke,

and she is willing to have you now perform the ceremony that makes her my wife."

"Miss Kenyon, this is Father Roland, a priest of the Catholic church."

Kate bowed in silence. She seemed to be about to appeal to the priest, but then the burning of her home and the murdering of her faithful slaves arose before her, and she knew the revenge of the pirate would be bitter indeed.

So she said nothing, and the priest remarked:

"I am sorry, my daughter, that there seems a necessity for this clandestine marriage; but then, this gentleman assures me that he loves you, and that the barriers to your union are such that he cannot do otherwise than make you his wife secretly."

"May I ask if it is your wish to be united in the bonds of matrimony with this naval officer, Captain Carlton?"

Kate saw how her pirate lover had deluded the good priest by implying that he was an officer of the navy, and yet she could utter no word against the sacrifice she was making.

So she said, in a low tone:

"It is."

"Then I can do nothing else than unite you as man and wife."

And the priest took out his book, turned so that the moonlight fell full upon it, and joining the hands of the two, repeated the marriage ceremony.

The pirate answered clear and full, but the responses of Kate were hardly audible.

Then, when the last words were uttered, she snatched her hand away from the grasp of Carl Casandra, and fairly tottered away.

Instantly he sprung after her.

"Go! I have kept my word."

"Go! or I betray you to the priest!" she said, huskily.

He spoke a few words in a low tone, which she did not hear, and returning to the priest, said:

"Well, father, we will return to the vessel now, and you shall be landed before dawn at your home, as I promised; and you will not go empty-handed, either."

"The lady seems to bear some deep distress, my son."

"Yes, father; but I cannot tell you all now, though some day you may hear what this midnight marriage means."

"Only keep it secret until you have my permission to tell."

"Certainly, my son, though I must record it."

"Of course."

And they walked on in silence down the path, circled the shore of the cove, and crossing the point of land, came to a boat awaiting them.

Into this they got, and were rowed out to the Spitfire, which at once got up anchor and sped back down the bay; while poor Kate, returning to the cliff, watched her departure with a heart that was full of anguish, as she murmured over and over again:

"My God! I am a pirate's wife!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A CUTLASS COMBAT.

AFTER running out of the Sound, Captain Carl began at once his piracies upon the high seas, and ordering his lieutenant, Lennox—who had been rescued with the pirate prisoners on board the schooner—to head for the Chesapeake, he at the same time gave orders to bring-to every vessel in their course.

This delayed the Spitfire on her way, so that by night she was passed by the Vidette unseen, and the vessel-of-war entered the Chesapeake ahead of her enemy.

Strict inquiry from all the fishermen and coasters convinced Lieutenant Beverly that the Spitfire had not yet passed up the Chesapeake; but he relied on Duncan Dare's idea, that he would do so, and did not despair, as he knew there might arise many reasons for the pirate's delay.

At last it was decided to run up to Baltimore and make a search, and on the return Duncan wished to land and tell Kate Kenyon that her outlaw lover was not dead, as believed, but again afloat in his dangerous vessel, and warn her to be on the watch for a visit from him.

That night, as the Vidette was cruising slowly up the bay, under shortened canvas, the lookout's voice sung out from aloft:

"Sail ho!"

"It is the schooner!" cried Duncan Dare, the moment he leveled his glass upon a vessel that just then shot out from behind a bold cliff-like point jutting into the bay.

"Are you sure, Dare?" asked Lieutenant Beverly.

"I am, sir; it is the pirate schooner Spitfire."

"Ah! he sees us, and is starting to fly, for his sailor's eyes tell him we are armed."

Instantly all was excitement upon the Vidette, the drum beat to quarters, the craft was covered with sail, and she sped away in chase of the pirate, who was hardly a mile ahead.

The Spitfire also became overshadowed with canvas, and, as she started up the bay in flight, suddenly from her stern guns belched red flame and iron shot came flying over the Vidette.

"At those bow guns there!" shouted Lieutenant Beverly.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Aim well, and let yonder pirate feel the weight of your metal!"

"Ay, ay, sir," came the cheery response, and at once the combat raged sharp and fierce between the two vessels.

Steadily however, though slowly, the Vidette gained, and it became a question of time only, when she would overhaul the Spitfire, unless the fire of the pirate damaged her in some way.

The firing from both vessels was well aimed, and each gave and received wounds, while now and then a brave tar would fall dead, and another sink down wounded upon the deck.

League after league was thus passed over in flight and pursuit, and toward dawn the cliff near Castle Kenyon loomed in sight.

Straight toward it, as though for shelter, the Spitfire ran, and luffed up sharp, when near, so that the tide drifted her against the steep wall of earth.

Instantly the pirate broke other ports in his bulwarks, and ran his port guns to starboard, turning his whole battery upon the coming Vidette.

With Duncan Dare at the helm, for he alone knew the channel to run in to the cliff, the Vidette pushed boldly forward under the scathing fire of the pirate.

"I'll run in, sir, luff sharp and lay her alongside, so we can board," said Duncan Dare.

"Ay, ay, my brave lad, and we'll carry her with the cutlass," answered Lieutenant Beverly.

It was evident that the pirates realized their desperate danger, and that only the most reckless courage could save them.

Many of their number lay dead upon the decks, their sails were shot almost to ribbons, and their only chance was to triumph or die.

The Vidette also had suffered heavy losses, but her sails and spars were in better condition than were the pirate's, while her bulwarks were badly torn with shot, shell and canister.

As she lay against the cliff, the long yard of the Spitfire was jammed into the earthen wall, a foot only from the summit, and, as the pirates had thrown out an anchor the schooner lay perfectly quiet, careened a little to starboard by the weight of all her guns.

These were kept firing rapidly at the approaching Vidette, for to cripple her was the only chance of Captain Carl, and he knew it but too well.

Measuring his chances with cool eyes, Duncan Dare headed the schooner off toward the Spitfire's stern, and then suddenly brought her bows round at lightning speed.

As she shot forward, to range alongside, she received a staggering blow from the guns of the pirate; but it did not check her and the two vessels came together with a shock that threw their crews down.

"Boarders follow me!" cried Burton Beverly, and, while some men threw grapnels, the balance sprung after their leader.

In wild terror the pirates at once gave way, shouting for quarter, while Captain Carl, seeing that all was lost, bounded upon the lee bulwark and went up the ratlines at a rapid rate.

Having laid the schooner alongside her enemy, Duncan Dare sprung forward and seized his cutlass to follow his lieutenant on board the Spitfire.

As he did so he caught sight of Captain Carl going up the ratlines on the port side.

A glance showed his intentions, and with his cutlass in his teeth the youth fairly flew up the starboard ratlines. The pirate had reached the yard, and was rapidly walking it toward the cliff, when Duncan Dare was upon him.

In self-defense and with a bitter oath, the chief turned and the blades of the man and the boy clashed.

It was a thrilling sight, and every eye was turned upon them.

There, his hand above his head clinging to the stay, stood the pirate chief, while grasping a severed rope, hanging down from aloft, was Duncan Dare, the midgy, and their cutlasses had met with a savage ring.

"Now, Duncan Dare, dead to the deck you go, and I have my revenge," shouted Carl the Corsair to the midgy.

As he spoke, he began the attack, and with only the loose rope to support him, the midshipman had no chance to protect himself, and his sword was struck from his grasp; but before the pirate could follow up his advantage, the boy swung himself off from the yard, clinging to the rope end, and Captain Carl turned quickly and started for the cliff.

But suddenly a form confronted him, standing on the edge of the cliff and barring his way.

It was Kate Kenyon, and she held a pistol in her hand, leveled at the heart of the pirate.

"Now, Carl the Corsair, you are my prisoner!" she cried.

The man beheld her father back on the cliff and with him half a hundred slaves.

Flight in that direction was madness, and so he looked down upon the decks below, and then at the narrow strip of water between his vessel and the cliff.

Instantly he made up his mind and with a leap went down like a rocket.

A cry arose from all who saw the act, and Burton Beverly sprung upon the bulwarks and peered down into the dark depths.

But the water was lashed to foam and nothing was seen of the daring outlaw.

"So let him perish!" he said.

"Lower away boats and search for him, for I do not believe he is dead," cried Duncan Dare, as he hastily descended from aloft.

Boats were at once lowered, but no sight of the pirate could be had, and all at last came to the conclusion that he was dead, for it was said that there were numerous whirlpools and eddies at the base of the cliff to draw him down to death.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AFTER THE COMBAT.

"MISS KENYON, my friend and commander, Lieutenant Burton Beverly."

It was the introduction of Burton Beverly to Kate Kenyon, an hour after the desperate combat between the pirate and the schooner-of-war.

Mr. Kenyon had gone down on board the vessels, grasped the hand of the boy most warmly, and been presented to his commander and brother officers.

"I must insist upon you gentlemen being my guests, lieutenant, as long as you remain here, and my negro carpenters and blacksmiths shall do all in their power to get your vessel in shape, while I have any number of spars, sails and all that you may need."

Lieutenant Beverly thanked the planter most warmly for his kindness.

It was his intention to make his way crippled as were both vessels, to Baltimore, and then re-fit wholly.

But when he went upon the hill and met Kate Kenyon, after Duncan Dare had presented him to the maiden, he seemed suddenly to change his mind and the result was that he told the planter he would repair damages there in the Castle Kenyon harbor.

To advance the young midgy, as much as lay in his power—for he looked upon his capture of the pirate as in a great degree owing to Duncan Dare, whose advice he had followed, and who had so skillfully handled the schooner during the action—Lieutenant Beverly made out his report of the whole cruise, from the start to the capture, and sent Duncan Dare with it to Washington, the planter placing his carriage at the disposal of the youth.

Duncan Dare was gone about a week, and reported that the country was ringing with the story of the desperate battle, capture of the Spitfire and death of the famous Captain Carl, the Corsair, while the President personally complimented to the midgy Lieutenant Beverly and his officers.

"One thing is certain," thought the knowing midgy upon his return, "and that is that Burton Beverly, my respected commander is most desperately in love with Kate Kenyon, and I don't blame him either, for, if I was older, and if Jessie was not around, I'd love her myself."

"Miss Kate says she never intends to marry, but somehow I believe Lieutenant Beverly can make her change her mind."

"Well, we'll see," and the midgy went down to look after the two schooners, for he had just returned from Washington when he made the discovery regarding the lieutenant being in love.

He found the two vessels in perfect trim. The shot-marks had been filled in, the splintered spars replaced by new, the grape-torn decks had been smoothed over, the rigging mended,

and the sails so neatly patched that the patches were hardly visible.

The wounded men were camping under canvas tents upon the shore, the prisoners were confined in the hold of the Vidette, and the dead had been buried over on the wooded point.

At last the hour of sailing came, farewells were spoken, and the two schooners stood out of the little haven and headed down the Chesapeake, their destination being New York harbor.

Duncan Dare was commanding the prize, and in a spirit of rivalry the two beautiful schooners started on a trial of speed.

All sail was spread upon both, and they forged swiftly through the waters, neither seeming to be able to shake the other off.

One night, as Duncan Dare sat alone in his cabin, his eyes suddenly rested upon one of the braces of the roof which seemed slightly sprung.

Rising, he stepped toward it, and reaching his hand so as to touch it, he discovered that it appeared to be loose.

Getting upon a chair, he made a discovery that caused him to give a low whistle.

The brace was just like the other in appearance, only a part of it was open, swinging down like a lid, and making a secret box, or drawer within, some five inches wide and twenty in length.

In it were a number of papers, a morocco box containing some jewels, a few thousand dollars in gold and a map that seemed to be of some locality, and had been much used.

The papers were of a nature that seemed to need a key to understand them, and some of them had bearing evidently upon the map.

There were two letters among them, and they were addressed to

"CAPTAIN CARL,
MARKS.

"In care of

"Shipping Merchant,
"Baltimore,
"Maryland."

"No. 3 Basin.

These letters were written in a bold hand, and one read:

"If Mr. Marks guarantees Captain Carl, I am willing to do all in my power.

"Let him get the password from Mr. Marks, and he will find that I am wholly at his service."

"FIREFLY.

"Chief of H. of H."

The other letter, written in the same hand, was dated some time after the first, and was as follows:

"SANDY HOOK RETREAT.

"TO CAPTAIN CARL THE CORSAIR:—

"Sir:—Your letter received, and the guarantee of merchant Marks satisfactory.

"I can supply you with the men you desire, and they will all be first-class seamen.

"Run into the Horseshoe by night, send a messenger to my camp, and upon his giving the signal it will be answered, and he will be led to me.

"He must seek the third cedar mound from the lightning-struck tree near the shore, before he gives the signal, which will be the hooting of an owl three times.

"The password your man must give my sentinel will be Black Flag, and let this stand between us whenever you wish to communicate with me.

"Destroy this letter when read.

"I will have for you thirty-five men."

"FIREFLY.

"Chief of H. of H."

"Well, I have found out a secret, and one I can use, I think, for Captain Carl did not destroy this letter, as requested by the writer."

"Now to signal the Vidette, and have a little talk with Lieutenant Beverly," and the boy commander went on deck to signal the Vidette, that Lieutenant Beverly might come on board the Spitfire and see the discovery he had made in the secret receptacle of the pirate vessel.

CHAPTER XIX.

DUNCAN DARE'S DISCOVERY.

THE signal from on board the Spitfire, for Lieutenant Beverly to come on board, somewhat startled that officer, and he had the schooner luffed sharp, a boat lowered and filled with armed men, and was pulling rapidly for the prize in a very few moments after the signaling had ceased.

Lieutenant Beverly had also ordered the officer left in charge of the Vidette to run down nearer the schooner, for as the pirate prisoners were on the Firefly, and Duncan Dare had not a very large crew, he feared they might be attempting to seize the craft.

He was greatly relieved, when coming near enough to hail and ask:

"What is it, Dare?"

"No trouble, sir, as I see you have imagined; but I have made a slight discovery, and wished

"to consult you, and, as there is something to show you here, I asked you to board the Spitfire, instead of my going to you."

"All right, I am here," and Burton Beverly sprung on board the Spitfire.

"Your schooner sails well, Dare, and I do not understand how it was we overhauled her as we did in the chase after her," said the lieutenant.

"I shifted her guns, sir, and it seemed to increase her speed greatly, while the new spars we put on her caused her sails to be enlarged, so that she carries considerably more canvas."

"True, and she stands up well under it; but what is your discovery?" and the two officers went together into the cabin.

"Do you see anything wrong with that deck brace, sir?"

"No."

"Well I did, for it had not been tightly closed. Tap it, sir!"

"Hollow, by Neptune's beard!" cried the lieutenant as he struck it with his sword-hilt.

"Yes, sir, there is a secret box there, and it is opened by pressing this little ornament, as you see," and to Duncan's touch the side of the brace flew open.

"Ah! a very ingenious hiding-place for the pirate to keep his small valuables; but it is empty, as he had not been out long enough to get rich."

"No, sir, it was not empty, for I got these out of there," and Duncan Dare showed the papers, the gold and the jewels.

"Ah! you have made a good find, Dare."

"But are the papers of any use?"

"I hope to find them so, sir; at least these two letters are," and he read the letters signed by Firefly.

"Now my idea is, sir, that Captain Carl got his crew through some merchant in Baltimore, Marks, whoever he may be, and he secured them through this Firefly."

"And who is he?"

"You see he dates one of his letters Sandy Hook, and he signs himself H. of H."

"Well, what does that mean?"

"There is a bold band of smugglers upon Sandy Hook, who are known as the Hawks of the Hook, and I have heard that their chief is called Captain Firefly."

"I see, I see! you are unraveling the tangled skein, Duncan, my boy, so let me know more."

"Well, sir, I believe, if you will permit me to do so, I can run into the Horseshoe, and find the third cedar mound he speaks of."

"As for an owl I can just make one of those birds envious when they hear my hoot, for I used to frighten the chickens almost to death on the farm, and have had Dan up hours at a time, with his gun, blazing away into a tree to kill an owl, when I would be lying in my bed up-stairs and hooting for fun."

"But, Duncan, you would not go there alone?"

"Yes, sir, alone to the mound to meet the sentinel, but have two-score good fellows following me, and we could give the smugglers a grand surprise, capture some of them certainly, and get all their booty."

"It is worth the risk, certainly, only you take the greater chances, for all might not come out as you hope."

"I'll tell you sir, what we might do?"

"Well."

"There are among the prisoners, some of Captain Carl's old crew, and I might select one from among them, promising him his release, if he would lead us to the smugglers' retreat."

"A good idea, Duncan, so go ahead with it."

Duncan then descended to where the prisoners were confined, looked them over carefully and his eyes fell upon one young man whom he had before observed, and who seemed out of place among that band of cut-throats.

"My man, how long have you served with Captain Carl?" he asked.

"Since he turned pirate, sir."

"Come with me, my man, for I wish to have a talk with you."

"Guard take his irons off."

The guard obeyed, and the young pirate followed the midshipman upon deck and then into the cabin.

He saluted politely, as he saw Lieutenant Beverly, and then stood in an attitude of respectful attention.

"Well, Dare, say what you would, and I am with you," said Lieutenant Beverly, as he lighted a cigar.

"My man, you do not look like one, who should be a pirate, for you have an honest face," Duncan Dare began, with the air of one who wore thirty years upon his shoulders.

"I was brought up by an honest mother, sir,

and when she died I sought my father, whom I had not seen for many years."

"I thought he was skipper of a coaster, sir, and that I would have a chance to see service at sea."

"But I found he was mate on board a smuggler craft, and he kept me with him, until he was killed some time ago."

"Then I volunteered to go with Captain Carl, and it was my intention to leave him in a foreign port and try and lead an honest life once more; but he would not allow me ashore when we landed, and when we were attacked I would not be coward enough to desert my shipmates, pirates though they are."

"Such is my story, sir."

The young man spoke in a frank way, and it was evidently the truth that he told, and Lieutenant Beverly said:

"Are you willing to live an honest life now if you get the chance?"

"Gladly, sir."

"Suppose you are offered a coxswain's berth on my schooner, would you pledge yourself to serve, and not desert?"

"I would do so, sir, with pleasure, for my heart is not bad, and I am not a pirate through my own will."

"Do you know a band of smugglers known as the Hawks of the Hook?" asked Duncan Dare.

"Yes, sir; they were the ones that my father belonged to."

"Their leader is called Captain Firefly?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know their haunts?"

"Yes, sir."

"You could lead a party to their secret retreat?"

"Yes, sir; I could."

"And you will?"

"No, sir; I would not betray my shipmates, be they ever so evil," was the bold response.

"Suppose you are offered full pardon, and a berth on a vessel-of-war, if you would?"

"I would not betray them, sir."

"You prefer to hang?" said Lieutenant Beverly.

"I do not wish to be hanged, sir, for I am young, and the world is before me; but I will not betray those who have been my shipmates."

"Well, sir, you have the chance to do so, or to hang with them, so decide."

"My mind is made up, sir, for I will hang rather than betray them."

Burton Beverly called Duncan Dare one side.

"That youth is game, and I believe he would die before he betrayed them."

"I feel that he would, sir."

"I wish to save him, so I'll see what terms I can make with him, and, if I find he does not deceive us, I will put him to work on one of the schooners."

Returning to the cabin, the lieutenant continued:

"What is your name, my man?"

"Carroll Carr is my real name, sir; but the men call me Ratline."

"Well, Carroll Carr, can you tell me how many men Captain Firefly has in his band?"

"Over a hundred, sir."

"Ah! and all at his retreat?"

"Oh, no, sir, for many are out upon the cruisers."

"And how many cruisers has he?"

"Five."

"All small vessels?"

"Yes, sir."

"And will you tell me where their cruising-ground is?"

"No, sir."

"Nor their rendezvous?"

"No, sir, I can tell nothing."

"But you know."

"Yes, sir."

"Do you suppose there are men among your band who are my prisoners, who would betray the secret?"

"There are men, sir, whom gold, and a fear of death will cause to do anything."

"You are right, Carr; but I feel that you are not one of these men, and, although I regret your stand, I can but admire you for it, so I will show my confidence in you by letting you go to work at once as a hand on board this vessel."

The young man looked anything but pleased, and he said in an earnest way:

"I thank you, sir, for your kindness, and I am most glad to accept your generous offer; but if I do, my shipmates will at once say I am a traitor, and I do not care to have them think ill of me, while it will certainly look so, should you raid the den of the Hook Hawks, as you imply you will."

"By Jove, you've got an old head on your young shoulders, my lad, and I will send you back to your irons, until the day I turn my prisoners over for trial; then I will spare you."

"Oh! sir, I thank you, and I will do all in my power to prove I appreciate your kindness."

"Ho, guard!"

"Ay ay, sir."

"Put this man in irons, and take him back among his comrades."

"Ay ay, sir," answered the guard, and the young sailor was led back to his fellow pirates, while Duncan Dare said:

"Lieutenant Beverly, I will lead the men against the Hook Hawks, if you will allow me so to do, sir, and I believe I can reach them by following the directions in this letter."

"You can take forty men, Dare, and I will land and follow you with thirty more as a reserve, and I am confident no smuggler band can defeat seventy of our brave tars."

"Once we have them in our power, to capture their little fleet will not be so difficult, for we will find traitors among them, when death is on one side, and gold on the other."

"Now I will return on board the Vidette, and we will time ourselves so as to run in about midnight to the Sandy Hook harbor, and no lights must be set on either vessel, for we must wholly surprise them."

CHAPTER XX.

THE HAWKS OF THE HOOK.

IN the midst of the low point of land, known as Sandy Hook, stand to-day the ruins of what appear to have once been a fort.

It is circular in form, half an acre in size, and its outer wall and summit is densely overgrown with cedars oak and other trees, the branches of which are interlaced with vines until an almost impassable barrier is formed to an entrance into the interior.

The sea and winds drifted the sand up around an old wreck, which a terrible storm, over a century ago, had borne on an unusually high tide far over the beach.

The sea dashing over, the winds howling about the wreck, had formed this barrier or wall of land, and trees taking root therein had firmly grown, thus forming a safe retreat within.

The old wreck served as a house, for its decks had been boarded over, and doors and windows had been cut in the sides of the hull.

A single mast, rising to the tops of the trees, served as a perch upon which a lookout could sit and view the sea, up and down the coast, the entrance to the lower bay of New York, and the approaches to the Hook from within.

Mounted upon broad wheels without the little fort was a boat some forty feet in length, very deep, narrow, and certainly a thorough sea craft.

It was schooner rigged, with masts of single sticks, not very tall, but with booms, gaffs and a bowsprit of great length, which enabled her to carry a large spread of canvas.

This was evidently done to prevent her masts from being seen over the tree-tops, and at the same time make her the more stiff in a blow.

She was mounted, as I said, upon wheels, and beneath the broad tires were laid boards, so that she could run down to the beach as far as the tide came up.

From there she could be dragged into the sea, and a small life-boat near, containing a four-bladed anchor and cable, could be taken out ahead, the hook let go, and by the rope about her windlass she could be warped off-shore, even with the wind from the sea.

So complete were all arrangements that the boat could have been run into the sea in less than half an hour, and with as small a force as twenty men.

Into this fort I wish the reader to accompany me, on a dark and blustering night several days after the visit of Lieutenant Beverly to the Spitfire, on the run home from the Chesapeake.

In the center of the old wreck is a large hall, as it were, with tables set about and bunks about the walls.

Several ship-lamps give light, and some two dozen men are ranged about, playing cards, drinking and talking together.

They were a wild set of fellows, armed thoroughly, and, without doubt, desperate men.

"Lads, touch that bottle lightly, for the boats should be in now at any moment, and we must have our wits about us to get their cargoes off before dawn," said a stout man with bearded face, and who was smoking a pipe.

"We'll be all right, cap'n, never fear; but you don't expect the whole fleet in to-night?" asked one.

"Yes, for I arranged that they should meet at Barnegat, coming from below, and at South Bay coming from above, and time themselves so as to all get to the Hook together."

"Then they can dump their cargoes and get out by dawn, and we can run the booty in here during the day."

"Cap'n, a lad here, sir, who gave the signal you had for Captain Carl," said a man, appearing in the door.

"Hal! it was rumored that Carl was dead, but he is like a cat with nine lives; so he is all right, I am glad to know."

"Ho, lad, are you the messenger?" and the smuggler leader turned his gaze upon Duncan Dare, who stood in the doorway.

"Yes, I am the messenger," was the calm reply.

"Well, sir, come here and let me hear what you have to say of yourself."

"I have to say, Captain Firefly, that you are my prisoner!" came the ringing response.

"Move and you die! Surrender all!" shouted Duncan Dare, and he leveled a pistol in one hand, while he drew his cutlass in the other.

But the smugglers were upon their feet, wild cries of alarm broke from their lips, and then into the hull cabin dashed through every door half a dozen gallant tars.

Instantly a fierce combat was begun, the lamps were put out, smoke filled the place, and the flashes of pistols alone illumined the scene.

Holding the doors the men-of-war's-men kept the smugglers at bay, and in the cabin, as they deemed, all of them.

But Captain Firefly and a few made their escape, and when at last the fight ended, and lights were brought, it was seen that but half the force was there.

A companionway up to the deck showed the means of escape, and collecting his men, Duncan Dare was about to start in pursuit, when a wounded smuggler called out:

"You needn't look for the Hawks, as they have gone."

"But they cannot leave the Hook without boats so soon."

"They've got a boat you'll never catch, young cap'n," was the reply.

Out of the fort dashed Duncan Dare, and there, just standing off from the shore was the schooner already described.

The time had come when the smugglers were to put her to good service, and she had saved them, or at least one-half of their number.

She had been daily overlooked and kept in trim, she was stored ready for sea, and she had not failed them in dire need.

But the capture of the secret retreat of the Hawks of the Hook was a great triumph, for the booty in the old wreck was very valuable, and besides a dozen dead and wounded as many prisoners had been taken, while, upon returning to the anchorage to report to Lieutenant Beverly his success, and ask him to pursue the schooner, Duncan Dare discovered that that officer had come upon the little outlaw fleet of five sloops, run one ashore, her crew escaping, sunk another, captured two, and the fifth had escaped.

This was glory enough for one night's work, and the schooners were brought to anchor in the Hook, with their prizes, and Duncan Dare was sent up to the commandant of the Government yard at New York to make the report of what had been done, and the breaking up of the fleet and band of the Hawks of the Hook.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

So successful a pirate and smuggler hunter had Duncan Dare shown himself to be, that the Government allowed him to carry out a plan of his own, build a small vessel, with what the prizes had brought him, and go specially on the duty of breaking up the outlaw bands that infested the coast.

His success in this line of duty won for him fame, honor, and riches, and yet, through all his wanderings he never forgot sweet Jessie Hampton his boyhood sweetheart, and hoped, when he grew to man's estate, that she would share with him his name and his triumphs.

With the shadow upon her life of having been a pirate's bride, Kate Kenyon refused the love offered her of Burton Beverly, and thus brought sorrow to his life, as well as her own, for she dearly loved the gallant young officer.

With a lingering fear in her heart, caused by words of her son, that her husband might still be alive, the widow Dare declined the offer of Squire Hampton's heart and hand, and continued to dwell alone in her elegant home, that arose on the ashes of the old farm-house, sur-

rounded only by her faithful servants, and with Dan as overseer, for he had recovered from the desperate wounds given him by Captain Carl.

Thus, kind reader, I ring down the curtain upon the scenes and characters of my romance.

THE END.

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